Murder by Warrant

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INTRODUCTORY

Argumentum ad Judicium.

IMPERIAL Parliament—the Mind of the Realm—treats the question of constituting a Court of Criminal Appeal with glaring indifference. The peril of hanging the wrong man—a possible crime of ghastly complexion—is grimly apparent and coolly ignored. A Bill to create a Court of this character was, in March, 1897, brought before Parliament by Mr. PICKERSGILL; but, overwhelmed by the modesty of humanity, he excluded Capital Cases from its purview! This diligent concern for the conscience of the Commons met its merited reward. A Bill so beautifully humdrum, so pliant and tentative, rendered the course of the Government clear. They patronised it affably and allowed a second reading. But this indulgence was conceded on the understanding that the troublesome measure should be decently shelved, and the yielding member for Bethnal Green bowed to the inevitable.

The March discussion resembled some meteorological incidents peculiar to that gusty month. There was the usual clashing of legal opinions. But a conflict among barristers is a harmless novelty. A crowd of clever lawyers cavilling

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over a problem is a familiar spectacle. Position and capacity, however, involve necessity to be serious, and the constitution of a Court of Criminal Appeal was advocated by politicians whose eminence and responsibility justify suspicion of sincerity.

I intend to examine the following questions :— (1) *Is responsible opinion on the side of the constitution of a Court of Criminal Appeal?* (2) *Is there a peril of hanging the wrong man?* (3) *Is the Home Office a satisfactory Tribunal for Criminal Appeals?*

Weighty opinion is obviously in favour of the *immediate creation of a Court of Criminal Appeal.*

Sir Albert Rollit, M.P., LL.D., D.C.L., D.L., J.P., addressing the House of Commons, said :—

"The absence of a Court of Criminal Appeal had been a great blot upon our jurisprudence. . . . There had been a gradually increasing consensus of opinion that a reform in this direction was needed. . . . *The Judges,* recommended this reform. *Lord Esher,* the *Master of the Rolls,* had spoken very strongly in its favour."

Sir Robert Reid, Q.C., M.P. (ex-Attorney-General), declared :—

"The condition of things existing in this country was almost unique among civilised nations. Ample opportunities were given for appeal in civil actions . . . But what was the case in regard to questions of

character, of liberty, or *even of life?* . . . They had to consider . . . whether or not there was to be any opportunity given for the purpose of re-trying . . . the question of guilt or innocence before a Court of Criminal Appeal."

The Home Secretary (the Right Honourable Sir Matthew White Ridley, Bart, M.P.) said:—

"I think it is perfectly plain from the discussion that there is a general consensus of opinion in favour of some alteration of the law. . . . *Public opinion* is in the direction of something being done to increase the power of appeal in criminal cases."

The Right Honourable Sir Henry Fowler, G.C.S.I., M.P., D.L., J.P., added:—

"In a civil case, whether . . trivial or serious, there was the opportunity of revision . . . The *judgment in a criminal* case *blasts a man's character for the rest of his life*, and affects even his wife and family. He could conceive no stronger case than that . . . for an appeal in criminal cases."

Sir Richard Webster, G.C.M.G., Q.C., M.P., Attorney General, said:—

"The matter . . deserved consideration by Parliament, and he hoped the speeches which had been made might lead the House of Commons to be more willing to entertain

proposals and amendments in the criminal law of the country."

THE DAILY NEWS pithily remarked:—

"Whereas a dispute about sixpence may involve two appeals, or even three, *a capital conviction is final.*"

The late MR. MONTAGUE WILLIAMS, Q.C. (Metropolitan Magistrate), in "Leaves of a Life" wrote:—

"There would have been"—alluding to the *three trials over the Hatton Garden murder*—"no necessity for more than one trial had a Court of Criminal Appeal been in existence . . . I mean a Court having power to review a verdict or sentence in the light of any facts that might transpire after the trial. *For years, the reform for which I am pleading has been demanded of successive Governments.* . . . Are the liberty of the subject, and a *question of life and death*, mere secondary considerations?"

But, despite opinions expressed by popular men, the Mind of the Realm, indolently impractical, will, unless aroused from reckless apathy, neglect to inspire this vital innovation.

Is there a peril of hanging the wrong man?

Mr. PICKERSGILL, M.P., believes *the case of Mrs. Maybrick* "would have been amply met" by "a Court of Criminal Appeal." Many of us remember the painful perplexity of the Home

Secretary, and the startling conclusions at which he arrived. It is notorious that the highest legal dignitary in the land is still convinced of Mrs. Maybrick's innocence. Clever people may smile; but who, because Sir CHARLES RUSSELL defended her, would suppose that Lord RUSSELL of KILLOWEN (Lord Chief Justice of England) is blinded by the bias of advocacy? A man of marvellous acumen, of consummate experience, he declares *she was wrongly convicted.*

Revive for a moment *the Wainwright case.* Is anyone satisfied the right man was hanged? Possibly both the Wainwrights deserved capital punishment. That, however, is beside the question. Legal evidence, precisely applied, should alone procure conviction. But here it is an open secret that the brother acquitted of murder was guilty of the crime!

Now take *the Penge case.*

Of this the DAILY NEWS states:—

> "The Penge murder was referred by the present Lord CROSS, then at the Home Office, to several Judges, not including Mr. Justice Hawkins, who tried it. The result was *a free pardon* for one of four persons *sentenced to death*, and a *commutation* of the penalty on another."

I turn to the old Fenian days and *the affair of the Manchester rescue.*

THE NEW REVIEW of February, 1890, contains (p. 175) this statement:—

"The prison van that contained two convicted Fenians had been stopped. . . . . At the desperate risk of their own lives, a handful of Fenians had determined on the rescue of their friends, and . . . called on Brett, the constable within, to deliver up the keys. . . . Brett refused . . . . and the bullet, intended only to break the lock, gave him a mortal wound. . . Five men were arrested, tried for the murder of Brett, and *all found guilty*. Against one of these evidence was so slight that the Press reporters present at his trial signed a petition for his release, and on further investigation it was found that *he was the wrong man*, his *arrest a blunder*, and the finding of the jury an error."

The late Mr. MONTAGUE WILLIAMS, Q.C., in "Leaves of a Life," wrote:—

"*Peace was found guilty*. . . Mr. Justice Lopes passed sentence of death. . . The notorious culprit was executed at Armley Gaol. . . On the preceding Wednesday, he confessed to the clergyman who attended him that he had murdered a Manchester policeman in 1879 (for which offence *an innocent man had been sent to penal servitude for life*)."

"A man named *Pelizzioni was tried for murder*"—the Hatton Garden murder whereof he was innocent—"and found guilty. While he lay in the condemned cell, facts

came to light which gave rise to the belief that another man, of the name of Gregorio, was the real author of the crime. Gregorio was thereupon tried, and also *found guilty*, not actually of murder, but *of manslaughter*."

Mr. Robert Ascroft, M.P., during the discussion in the House of Commons, stated :—

"It is a crying scandal that . . . the liberty of the subject should be held at such a cheap rate. . . . Above all things they must have it thoroughly and clearly understood that in cases where *sentence of death* was passed, the prisoner should have the *right of appeal* at once. . . . *Personally, he was aware of injustice* having been inflicted upon prisoners, injustice which would assuredly have been removed had there existed a Court of Criminal Appeal."

Sir Albert Rollit said :—

"It was a notorious fact that there had been grave miscarriages of justice in criminal proceedings, *even in capital cases*. Happily, they seldom occurred, but still they did occur, and *the life of a perfectly innocent man might be taken*. . . . Some relics of barbarism still existed in English law."

Sir Robert Reid also said:—

"He believed cases of real injustice occurred under the present system. . . . A man was tried for his life and sentenced to death. He was tried . . . by a common jury.

> . . . Look at the *consequences* of a verdict. *They were expressed in . . . death or imprisonment,* and yet there was no opportunity allowed for reviewing the verdict. Such a law was not humane, was not what the law ought to be in a civilised country. . . . . There were persons best qualified to form opinions about criminal trials who would say that there were cases from year to year in which *innocent persons were convicted.*"

Notwithstanding these instances of the potence of the peril, the Mind of the Realm—lethargic and capricious—will continue nodding and droning and blinking the question, unless the Public, the power it dreads, is resolved to have its safety speedily secured.

Is the Home Office a satisfactory Tribunal for Criminal Appeals?

I deny that a Political Department, however competent in legal affairs, is qualified to conduct or deal with *judicial investigations.* The Judicial Mind is a gradual creation, is compounded of learning, practice, and experience, and is peculiarly expert in examining, valuing, and adjusting evidence, fact, and argument. These attributes are impossible to legal Officials at the Home Office; and, as a consequence, there is the serious comedy of a judicial trial being reviewed by non-judicial minds. This distinctly involves an absurdity. If a murder verdict merits review, it demands, undeniably, judicial review. If it is

essential to consume labour in balancing Judge and Jury, let the labour be Judicial—not Political!

Apart, however, from the necessity of a properly matured mind, there is grave danger in the Home Office by reason of the secrecy of its operations and the absence of obligation to formulate detailed decisions. Men are intensely careful when compelled to expose their reasoning, and any disposition to perfunctoriness is thereby jealously suppressed. But, in addition to these reflections, the brutal callousness of the existing system is transparent as we estimate its revolting cruelty to the convict who has established his innocence. The *Daily News* rightly observed:—

> "When a prisoner's innocence has been discovered, to offer him a free *pardon is an insult* . . . But it is nothing to the injury of the wrongful conviction, which no power can undo."

Sir Albert Rollit affirmed:—

> "Such a man ought not to go out into the world with a taint which carried ruin with it during the remainder of his life. What was needed was a rehearing in which *the man might be vindicated* and his character established."

Sir Henry Fowler added:—

> "One aspect of the question, the gravity of which had been overlooked . . . was the conviction of an innocent man . . . The judgment in a criminal case *blasts a man's*

character for the rest of his life, and affects even his wife and family."

Mr. Brynmor Jones, Q.C., M.P., thought :—

"It was an anomaly in the law that, while in the simplest case in the County Court a litigant might ask for a new trial, there should be no possibility of reviewing verdicts in cases involving *life and liberty*."

The Standard stated :—

"The existing machinery by which, in cases of judicial blunders, free pardons have to be granted to persons *convicted of offences they have not committed* is in the highest degree unsatisfactory.

The Daily News pointed out :—

"The Penge murder was referred by the present Lord Cross, then at the Home Office, to several Judges . . . But this action of Lord Cross was unprecedented, and has not been followed. *The Judges* might have refused to interfere, and the responsibility was his alone."

Sir Albert Rollit, said :—

"The proceedings before the Home Secretary were secret, and he ventured to say this *secret tribunal* carried with it a grave disadvantage in connection with the administration of justice . . . A person wrongly convicted could only appeal to a *secret tribunal* which, even though it set him at liberty, sent him forth to the world with *the brand of the criminal* still upon him."

Enough has been said to convince any reasonable mind of the existence of a flagrant anomaly; but the denseness of the Mind of the Realm in non-party reforms is proverbial. No power, save the Public, can quicken its conscience, and to the Public I therefore appeal. In the ensuing pages I propound a problem which I prescribe for public consumption. If valid, it sustains my plea for the immediate establishment of a Court of Criminal Appeal. If otherwise—"Well, thereby hangs a tale."

I conclude these lines with the warning words of the most experienced, perhaps the most celebrated, criminal lawyer of modern times—the late Mr. MONTAGUE WILLIAMS, Q.C.:—

> "You are told that circumstantial evidence is convincing. Now I deny that. Paraphrase it, and what does the statement mean? It means that human intellect is infallible. Is it to be said that circumstantial evidence has never been wrong? Have not convictions taken place where evidence has been proved to be wrong? In our own times you will see that over and over again, *life has been sacrificed* by circumstantial evidence; *homes have been wrecked* by circumstantial evidence."

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See *The Times*, *The Daily News*, and *The Standard*, of 25th March, 1897, for verification of extracts not otherwise identified.

NOTE

THE other day (March 16th, 1898), Mr. Pickersgill again besought the House of Commons to grant his Bill for creating a Court of Criminal Appeal a second reading. This time he included murder verdicts in his measure. Of course the lawyers were divided; but that barristers and solicitors should differ is as natural as the saltness of the sea. Mr. Asquith participated in the debate, and voted for the principle. He was, however, oppressed by the boding that the elasticity of the doctrine of mercy might be contracted by the innovation. How the clemency of the Crown could be curtailed by the advisory intervention of an appellate tribunal is a question too abstruse for plain understandings. Once more the "Daily News," in a powerful leader, gave the aid of its strenuous advocacy. Its concluding words are a warning. They are these:—

> *"The principle of Mr. Pickersgill's Bill seems to us a sound one, and we believe that, sooner or later, a Court of Criminal Appeal will be established. But one cannot help recognising that there is no popular demand for it, and that until there is, no Government will take the trouble of setting up so elaborate a piece of mechanism."*

E. T. C.

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CHAPTER I

Mr. Basil Lempriere was in the prime of life. He was verging on fifty-five, but, as he did not look his age, he was disinclined to misrepresent the fact. He possessed many endearing endowments, and, having justifiable grounds for personal idolatry, credited himself daily with a choice percentage of undissembled flattery. While those grim evils, greyness and baldness, were using him gently, he boasted an enviable array of features and genteel pretensions to undiminished symmetry. But, setting aside physical advantages, Mr. Lempriere consistently claimed the lustre of a glorious ancestry. A pedigree is pestering—puzzling the lawyer and maddening the layman! When unravelled it reveals chaos—is never a joy, often a curse, invariably a rigmarole. I hence eschew any disposition to sift the descent of Basil Lempriere. Whether he came down from the Conqueror, or dated himself from the Deluge, I

will not stay to enquire. I accept the fable he was fond of relating—that his forefathers won spurs on fields of chivalry, and framed his name with honour and distinction.

Mr. Lempriere had never coveted spurs, nor had he, indeed, sought distinction. He was a man of equable tendencies—temperate in ambition, subdued in affection, smooth and just in every social department. Still, famous exploits had distinguished his career in the field of finance. He was a banker. But now he was retiring into the elegant ease of luxurious independence.

A banker is a lucky man. He must have money and brains—must always be on the "Make," unquestionably in the "Know." Lempriere started business equipped with brains and stocked with cash. All along life he achieved success. His worst mistake was profitable, his wildest speculation a victory. He only touched dirt to transmute it into gold, the conversion being effected by flirtation with the "Know." He had been more than fortunate in making his money, making his friends, making his enemies. Having, at length, grown weary of inflated sufficiency, he was withdrawing from the glittering arena where character and conscience yield alike to cupidity.

The stage on which Mr. Lempriere had rehearsed and performed his parts was the Archiepiscopal City of York, a place placid enough for banking aspirations, but scarcely embracing those ineffable charms prized by indolent affluence. He

was therefore on the point of swooping down on that bright spot of our metropolis styled the West End.

Mr. Lempriere already sported a reputation which was riveted in Yorkshire memories; but he was now beginning to revolve in a different orbit, and a new reputation, or one for something new, was necessary. After prolonged cogitation, so searching and severe that it threatened to extend his area of baldness, he decided to translate himself into a Member of Parliament.

There are numerous types of the senatorial species comprised in the compendious abbreviation, M.P. There is the Member of general utility, with his fad, his foolery, or his figment. Again, there is the Member of inconvenient activity, always brimming over with captivating questions. Following, are the respectable mediocrities, the diners, the dozers, and the dreamers. But Lempriere could outshine mediocrities. He could speak pretty well; he could undeniably dine pretty well; and, if dozing was beneath his dignity, his dream of a future was prophesied by his snore.

House of Commons vacancies are constantly occurring. An old English gentleman, chilled by debate, catches a cold and applies for the Chiltern Hundreds. Down goes a new writ, and up comes a new member. This sort of performance played Lempriere into Parliament. The old English gentleman, the hero of the catarrh, was seated for somewhere in Yorkshire—somewhere

suiting the picturesque pattern of Lempriere's political creed. Away flew the ex-banker, longing to embrace his future constituents, though not destined to vault into fame until he had vanquished a nondescript noodle who had the temerity to oppose. But the noodle was quickly extinguished, being shut up and sat upon, put down and walked over, and otherwise visited with metaphorical chastisement.

Lempriere entered the House cherishing those succulent sensations which swiftly expand into supreme satisfaction. He marched proudly up the floor, between Government and Opposition, under the guardianship of two conspicuous celebrities. Everything passed off in flourishing, that is, parliamentary, fashion. Miss Lempriere witnessed the ceremony from the "Cage"; and, while she was not hysterical, she was, of course, in raptures. Several congratulating and envious relations viewed the scene from the same retreat, some applauding the new member's bearing, others the perfection of his tasteful toilette. Having shaken hands with the Speaker, he assumed his seat and his hat; and, improvising an air of senatorial wisdom, leaned back to enjoy some parliamentary meditation.

Fortunes seldom fail to reflect gleams of popularity. Once you are reputed rich, Society will simper, attend your dinners, pronounce your praise, remember you in the street. These beguiling incidents befel Basil Lempriere. He was soon nestling amidst items of aristocracy;

was speedily proposed at select clubs ; soon found himself figuring in fashionable drawing-rooms.

Mr. Lempriere was lingering over *The Times*. It was vastly entertaining, since it contained a report of his speech on the theory of relieving London from the plague of black smoke. He had told the House he could not pledge himself to banish smoke, but would extract colour and reduce it to an invisible nuisance. This subtle proposition was greeted vociferously, and hence his position in the Parliamentary report. He was gloating over the column for the fiftieth time, when the post brought a letter he leisurely opened. Languidly unfolding the missive, he cast a vacant eye over the page. No sooner had he comprehended the first line than his seeming indifference vanished. Intense amazement visited every feature, and, having read and re-read, he turned with avidity to a third perusal. What calamity had happened ? Had Anarchy prevailed and drilled Democracy into rebellion ? Had Consols collapsed and Capital cantered into oblivion ? Nothing of the sort. The world was in perfect repose. Somebody, however, had quitted it ; and, before doing so, had bequeathed to the lucky Lempriere a Legacy of One Hundred Thousand Pounds !

CHAPTER II

THE age of fifteen is not a ripe age—seldom an age of sober reflection. Really, it is the age of games and folly—hardly of old-fashioned originality. Still, boys have been budding generals or incipient poets at fifteen; or, abandoning juvenility, have recklessly espoused gentlemanly dissipation. But the youth of Frank Frogmore was unblessed by these showy singularities—it was steeped with old-fashioned originality. His youth finished at fifteen, at which age he stopped growing, stopped schooling, stopped looking young. Thenceforth he cultivated fixed views, fixed manners, a fixed disposition. Dressing in one style, he was faithful to his tailor. He dined—his repast being simple—at one hour, in the same company—alone! At last he got wrinkled and withered; lived to eighty; died a millionaire.

Frogmore was a financial favourite. He speculated keenly and lent money liberally. His interest was high, but it could conveniently accumulate and merge into capital. Nobody—until he was ruined—pleaded in vain with old Frogmore. Properly enticed, his purse would open its eloquent lips and pour forth brilliant

promise of the transient solace of postponing inevitable insolvency But the usurer counted for more than physicking demented patrimonies and propping up paralysed estates. He ruled potent companies, dominated secret syndicates, and dared to venture where others quailed.

Money!—ah, what fantastic power appertains to money! How enslaving is its fascination—what faults and failings it glosses and obliterates! It mingled Frogmore in society, buying cant and civility. The man was despised—his wealth welcomed. Successful as a schemer, he was pardoned as a miser. He bequeathed several millions, so his memory was preserved.

Frogmore's death brought divers benefits to the public purse, but the public heart throbbed no gratitude. An official heart, however, belonging to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, palpitated amends. As the immense estate disgorged its duty to the Treasury this benevolent official smiled his public amiability. Knowing that Madam Britannia ruled the waves by "Brass," he viewed the glittering accretion with unalloyed delight. Then came individuals of less consummate excellence, who reaped glowing tribute from testamentary errors. Some rascally cousins, who had been shunned and abhorred by old Frogmore, profited handsomely by his aloofness. Standing as successors to legatees who had discontinued that attitude, they coolly inherited and seized unmerited spoils. Other items of humanity gleaned more than grass by his unlamented

demise. Winding up and whittling down his property was wonderful work for the lawyers; and many members of that classic craft rubbed professional hands and beamed professional joy, and sunned professional souls with professional congratulation. Lastly, a group of interested busybodies basked contentedly in gilt-edged satisfaction; and the only gloomy individual was the dissatisfied undertaker. Frogmore had cruelly insisted upon a plain funeral, and the actual mourner in the cortège was the moody master of the ceremony.

Frogmore's habits were impressed with mystery. He lived somewhere, but nobody knew his house. He periodically disappeared without the slightest explanation. Possibly, emulating Diogenes, he dived from sight into an out-of-the-way tub; or, imitating the unspeakable Timon, haunted a wilderness, digesting roots, and digging financial plots on the breast of mother Earth. No explanatory intelligence was available, except some disjointed utterances by the old miser implying possession of an estate in fee in a sterile corner of the universe. After his death the lawyers discovered a musty deed conveying to Frogmore a freehold house surrounded by waste land. Was this a clue to his concealed corner of the universe?

Murkwoop Moor was a gloomy picture of desolation. It was in a remote part of the Midlands, and formed a sullen solitude. There were no roads or tracks, no trees or shrubs. Men avoided

it, birds shunned it. It was estranged from civilisation—a dreamless, dreary waste. Near the middle rose a gaunt house, massive and strong, and hemmed in by high walls. Probably it had a history; but not one to warm the fancy. The beholder stood chilled as he gazed on the house in the wilderness. No wonder the deed was musty. Fit deed for a weird retreat! How was known this sombre abode? What name had tradition bestowed? A voice from the past was heard exclaiming, "Murkwoop!"

CHAPTER III

FROGMORE'S will bristled with queerness. Every bequest was queerly characteristic; each legatee was symptomatically queer, excepting, of course, Mr. Lempriere. The charities selected succoured queerish candidates. One provided artificial legs for limbless paupers, and, being a sound-standing institution, demanded a bootless search into the means of every applicant. Another reclaimed thieves from pilfering proclivities, filling them once a year with boiled beef and hymns—the blend being designed as a staying lesson on the loveliness of honesty. Following was a Single-blessedness Association, which distributed blankets to decayed bachelors cast down by a lofty zeal in preaching the refinement of celibate asceticism. Then came a queer crowd of claimants, founding right to benefaction on abnormal appearance, mental angularity, distinguished deformity, or exceptional longevity. But the legacy to Lempriere elicited endless criticism. Apparently it was motiveless, and so, naturally, excited lively suspicion. It was exactly calculated to rivet the gaze of the curious on the astounded legatee—astonishment nearly stifling Lempriere. But if he was stunned, he was equally pained. He wished for the legacy—he wished it further. He was jammed indeed between hostile desires. The

cash was bewitching—the terms forbidding. The will banished him from society periodically, imposing a dreary condition—solitary residence in a mansion on Murkwoop Moor. In this dismal retreat he was to pass December to March, a self-sacrifice to be endured five times consecutively. Denied and removed from conversational raptures, he was to perform his penance, and until its completion not a penny of the legacy could be touched. But what chastening moments would herald the last expiring fraction of five years of hope deferred!

"Yes, Josephine, Frank Frogmore was a cousin of mine. We never met—at least, if we did, we were mutually unconscious of the accident. He lived a singular life, and died without a friend near him in the old mansion of Murkwoop."

"But, papa," cried the young lady, proud to acknowledge such a fine-looking parent, "this legacy is most extravagant."

"Truly. An extraordinary price to pay for obliging me to submit to imprisonment in——"

"Imprisonment!" exclaimed Josephine. "In prison you sometimes see your keeper. In Murkwoop you will only see your shadow."

The thought of this unsubstantial companionship gave Lempriere uneasiness—a feeling he betrayed by meandering aimlessly about the hearthrug.

"And—Murkwoop!" continued the girl, disdainfully shrugging her shoulders. "The very name makes one shudder."

Poor Mr. Lempriere, having no consolatory defence, stooped and stroked his daughter's poodle.

Josephine Lempriere was an interesting young lady, who had passed her twenty-first year. An only child, a constant companion to her father, no school had been responsible for improving or retarding her mental capacity—the governess and master, receiving lavish fees, having scrupulously managed her education. Lempriere lost his wife while Josephine was a child; and, unhappily deprived of her best natural guardian, she bloomed into girlhood unguided by the love flowing from maternal solicitude. But she owned a well-trained heart, and possessed many gifts interwoven with talent. She might be described as elegant of figure, with beauty of an intellectual type. Wherever she went she won love and respect; and, superintending her father's household, gained the gratitude of his servants, while commanding the admiration of his guests.

If Lempriere, in most of his waking intervals, was a happy man, he had his galling moments. The conviction that his daughter would marry begot despondency, and fomented fits of friction with particular young men. Whenever he detected a particular young man paying marked attention to Josephine, the would-be suitor was subtly warned the daughter's disobedience meant a dowerless wife. Not that he allowed this unrefined manœuvre to reach the ears of his precious child. No, he was a practical politician, and the

paths of duplicity, or social diplomacy, were familiar tracks. In her presence he would lapse into mellific murmurings. Why should he be robbed of his treasure? Why?—seeing he had ignored the felicity of a second wife! But his sorrowing apprehensions would oft-times be replaced by thoughts of a tranquil tenor. Josephine would surely marry a handsome, clever man. "Was not I," he would whisper, "seized of these attributes when I entered gilt-edged wedlock? Did not I marry cash and accomplishments?" Aye, he had, and was proud to remember it. And relishing this review of his past, and banishing unpicturesque forebodings, he would musingly ignite a fragrant cigar, and dreamily transport his satisfied soul into the lulling shade of seductive reverie.

Had Miss Lempriere been catechised concerning the condition of her heart, she would have avowed it was totally free from the flutterings of love. Truly; because the mysterious attraction which draws together yielding hearts had not exerted its alluring influence. She held no specific enchantment for shielding her bosom against its secret assaults. "Barkis is willing," translated into more engaging language, had been breathed by insinuating asides; but, not having listened to this fervid disclosure from the future controller of her affection, the author of the implied passion was left to wonder or whistle according to the mood suggested by disappointment.

"What could have been Mr. Frogmore's motive

in leaving this legacy?" questioned Josephine.

"Not family affection, my dear."

"Perhaps he disliked you, and——"

"Perhaps so," mused the father, the ghost of a smile on his lips.

"And this money may be meant for a purpose —some harmful purpose," added Josephine, with true feminine logic.

The father strolled thoughtfully on the hearth-rug. He fancied his daughter was right. Frog-more had always been jealous of the Lemprieres. They were so superior, and left him so much alone. Yes, it was jealousy, and Lempriere smiled afresh. The old miser meant to prevent his making a position in Parliament.

"Then Mr. Frogmore was an enemy to Parlia-ments?" pouted Josephine.

"I believe he envied orators," softly hinted the M.P.

"Why accept this legacy, papa? What is money compared with fame?"

"Fame is a fair flower, but it withers; whereas cash is never affected by frost."

"But imagine passing months in an ugly building on a dreadful moor!"

"That description is not very flattering."

"Flattering!" cried the girl, scorn curling her lips. "Mr. Lambert said it was so horrid that it might send a man out of his mind."

Lampriere was visibly perturbed. A prospect of solitude followed by insanity was indeed unex-hilarating. Still, it was a peril he could realise.

Was not a thing of beauty a joy for ever? "Well," cutely reasoned the ex-banker, "if a lovely thing is a joy for ever, a vile thing is a bore for ever; and perpetual boredom is deucedly maddening." Indulging this elegant vein of reverie, he drifted into his family past to test whether symptoms of insanity had disturbed his ancestral intellect. Finding unbidden or refractory hallucinations had not incommoded his forefathers, he resolved to earn the legacy by a lively submission to the dulness of Murkwoop.

"But," remonstrated Josephine, "Mr. Lambert says the place is quite unprotected."

"So it is," confessed Lempriere, allowing his chin to droop on his matchless shirtfront.

"I am sure we can do without this stupid legacy!" exclaimed the daughter, heedless of the father's start at this flippant definition of a hundred thousand pounds. "We are rich enough, and I am really afraid of Murkwoop," whimpered the girl, handling her handkerchief, and seriously threatening to use it.

"It will only be for five years," remarked her father, drawing a mental picture of penal servitude.

"What protection would two elderly servants be if robbers were to attack the place?"

This allusion to elderly servants invested Lempriere with a surprise he pathetically expressed by lifting his eyebrows.

"Mr. Frogmore's will says," explained

Josephine, hastening to extricate her parent from his perplexity, "that only Job Jenkins and his wife may be permitted as servants at Murkwoop."

"Ah, yes," sighed her papa. "I fear I shall have to groom my horse, and perhaps have to polish my boots."

"But what would you do if burglars were to break in?"

"Shoot them, to be sure."

"How awful!" shuddered Josephine, rehearsing the fashionable feminine wincing at the mere mention of a revolver. "But you might not shoot them—you might miss them!"

"Ye—ye—ye-es," quavered the ex-banker.

"Is it the correct thing to shoot a robber?"

"Certainly not, my dear; but ——"

"Papa," interjected Josephine, "I am in dread of this horrid Murkwoop!"

"So am—er—er——" Lempriere modestly checked himself.

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of George Lambert senior, the lawyer who purveyed legal and friendly advice to the Lempriere family.

Lawyers seldom exhibit surprise. It hardly ever ruffles the professional manner or visits the professional countenance. Seamy delinquencies and rickety reputations are viewed with professional complacency. In all phases of moral iniquity the lawyer preserves an unblemished calm, recording no sign of surprise, except in his bill of costs, where it always appears in the total!

Something had really surprised Lambert senior —Frank Frogmore's will.

"Ah!" remarked the old lawyer, tenderly toying with the few hairs still clinging to his scalp, "Frank Frogmore was a most extraordinary man. He drew his will himself—not a word was invented by the lawyers. A most extraordinary man," concluded the old gentleman, giving his opinion gratis.

Lambert senior, was a tall, well-made man, whom age had not bowed nor infirmity weakened. The only faulty faculty was his voice, an organ which nevertheless inculcated firmness into frail or tottering clients. He was upright in his practice—squaring nearly all his actions. A staunch adherent to compromise, his judgment was as mellow as his punctilio; and he had been known to disdain accepting fees by declining infamous cases. His clients swore by—never at—him; and evinced their unalterable esteem by paying his handsome charges to the uttermost six-and-eightpence.

"And what have you decided I ought to do?" asked Lempriere of the lawyer.

"You must be a most obedient legatee. Frank Frogmore determined that nobody should pluck the fruits of his fortune without first labouring for the privilege. All the legatees stand committed to various penalties. Some must abstain from alcohol, others from tobacco. One must renounce family, another reside in Africa. The condition attaching to your legacy is really insignificant—

an annual recurrence of periodical solitude."

Lempriere looked as if periodical solitude was what he most imperfectly understood.

"By the way," remarked the lawyer, "do you happen to know your whimsical relative was a victim to religious enthusiasm?"

"Did that persuade him to send papa to Murkwoop?"

"Not likely, Miss Lempriere. His enthusiasm took the form of peculiar charity."

"Then it was no ingredient in his prescription for my dear papa."

"I agree," said Lambert, smiling quietly.

"Now what is my position? Where am I?" pleaded Lempriere.

"If you disobey," said the lawyer, removing his pince-nez definitely, "the terms of the legacy by so much as a jot, it will be forfeited, without reclaim, to the Crown."

"Such conditions are—er—well—confound them!"

"They are onerous," said Lambert, replacing his pince-nez. "The legacy has to be earned by strict attention to irksome obligations; for I assume, Lempriere, you regard solitude and silence as irksome, as I am bound to recollect you are a Member of Parliament."

"The Government will send down a detective by every train," groaned the ex-banker.

"Not improbable," replied the lawyer. "Governments are greedy. Then a General Election—don't start, Lempriere—is approach-

ing; and each year brings more expenditure and louder grumbling. I am not a Liberal, neither am I a Conservative," meekly avowed Lambert, who, for professional purposes, neatly balanced himself between extremes. "No; the Government that rules wisely, spends wisely, and secures a surplus—disdaining mob clamour and traffic in votes—is the Government I venture to support."

"Ah," said Lempriere, who had become reconciled to the slavery demanded by Parliamentary Whips, "you would have gods to adorn the Treasury, and angels to answer the division bell. Until you get such a celestial assembly you must put up with party tricks and political subserviency to the mob. The mob, after all, really governs. It may not comb its hair, change its linen, or use sufficient soap and water; but, despite these unsavoury drawbacks, the mob really rules." And, pleading painful recollections of the aforesaid drawbacks to excuse the freedom, Lempriere craved his daughter's permission to kindle a fragrant cigar.

"Well," answered Lambert, "we will not argue the incidents of mob government. I am old-fashioned, and lean to a Government unawed by the unthinking mob. I say unthinking, because when, if ever, does the mob think? People err in saying thinking is easy. It is a difficult and tedious operation, and requires much training and care. My professional habit of pondering steps before I take them induces a circumspection which, I imagine, is foreign to—er—er— But

let us cease to concern ourselves about our grand old country, as thus we shall best imitate the conspicuous manner of our modern master, the mob." And, slyly rubbing his handsome old nose, the seasoned lawyer drifted easily back to the business in hand.

"Papa will never be able to invite a soul to Murkwoop," burst in Josephine.

"Certainly—one visitor a month, and no shelter for the night," assented Lambert, quietly polishing his pince-nez.

Again Lempriere shot up his eyebrows, and was lost in the interior of wonderment; and again his daughter, assisted by the lawyer, rescued him from the danger of dilemma.

"Oh," he gasped, realising the point, "then I must eat, drink, and smoke alone, and never listen to a visitor's voice, unless—er——"

"Purchase a phonograph—the mechanical enemy to silence—and let your monthly visitor talk into it; and, if you wish, by the same substitute a solo or sermon can be had for the asking."

Lempriere looked his gratitude, and pressed the lawyer's hand.

And now the trio turned to the topic uppermost in their minds—whether the father could claim the companionship of his daughter during the last month of each incarceration. This knotty point had exercised the acumen of Lambert senior, had taxed the astuteness of the Treasury, had tested the ingenuity of the Trustees. It had resulted—guess the joy of parent and child!—in the united

opinion that Josephine could share the solitude of Murkwoop in the month of March in every term.

CHAPTER IV

Signor Victor Corelli was a wealthy and accomplished Italian. The extent of his wealth was a mystery; but his polish was more accessible, since it reposed on the surface and was lavishly displayed. He still wooed trade, passing as a merchant. He had never, owing to sentimental or occult objection, traded in his native land. Although the attractions of Italy were unfading, Corelli evinced a retiring disposition whenever its charms were the subject of eulogy. Perchance Italians were not commercial enough, or Naples, where he was born, was too impecunious for the fever of financial finesse. Perhaps native cookery failed to tickle his palate, or he had profited more by leaving than by living with his countrymen. Whatever it was, whether banishment by self or circumstances, it was obvious the date and drift of the wind which wafted him to distant climes were twin points of speculation. But to compensate for this uncertainty it was common knowledge he had centred his enterprise on a South American Republic, and, in return, it had yielded him a magnificent portion of its inestimable riches. He was a handsome man,

his features being cast in a mould of pure Italian; and, patronising a common folly, he conceived he had sprung from an ancient stock; but his stock of merchandise had made his money, and this imposing testimonial Society had approved.

Some sneering people spoke scornfully anent the Italian, saying he dared not show up at Naples, and that queer stories slurred his early life. What on earth did it matter? Was he not vastly wealthy? Was he not versed in all the tricks of South American Securities? Who ever suspected his fame was spotless? Where is the record that is stainless—the escutcheon which brooks no blur or blemish? Fame may be fair, even if tarnished. Who claims it can be spotless? Corelli had sipped his enjoyable indiscretions, had indulged his tender foibles. Nobody knew this better than his enemies, a clique including those conscientious prigs who coveted the knack of making cash as quickly as Victor Corelli.

The foreigner's name was creating a stir in City circles. He owned a colossal South American Railway Concession, which, comprising deviously devised estimates and fictitious prices, foreshadowed brilliant prospects of surreptitious profit. Corelli, therefore, was emphatically the person to be petted by that prudent and plastic party who keeps one eye on hospitality and the other on the look out.

It always happens so. You don't wish to meet a particular person, and you tilt against him the very next morning. You don't want to be

pleasant to him, and he coaxes you into the happiest of dialogues. You crave to believe him crafty and false, and he wheedles you into the flattest confidence. Lempriere had no desire to meet Corelli, loving foreigners in the fashion of Britons who sturdily distrust competitors and rail consistently at protective tariffs. But he did meet Corelli, and was duly delighted. He admired the man; praised his style; relished his compliments; invited him to dinner.

"You see, my dear Lempriere," said Corelli, glancing complacently at his well-shaped hand, "the scheme of which I am Concessionaire requires delicate manipulation."

Lempriere, famed for astuteness, nodded acquiescence.

"My Concession," resumed Corelli, toying with his cigar, "must be sold out-and-out like a pound of beef steak; but," and the guest eyed the host wistfully, "the price I obtain must be as invisible as the heat of a stove that cooks the meat."

There was a pause. Cooking meat was not in Lempriere's line; but cooking concoctions contrived to tickle public taste had engaged the cunning of his skill. As his soft foreign accent died away, the Italian looked curiously at Lempriere, lingering in the attitude of an expectant listener; but the latter having assumed a similar pose, Corelli returned to his subject with a deferential smile.

"The lovely railway contained in my grand Concession will cost two millions of sovereigns."

"A very heavy capital. How did you arrive at it?"

"It was carefully invented by me and my coadjutors."

"And your Republic have passed and agreed to it; and have guaranteed interest on it at six per cent.," remarked Lempriere, studying the clauses of the Concession.

"I told my Republic that, if they wished Europeans to subscribe, they would have to guarantee interest on capital."

"Precisely. Now, what are you to get out of it?"

"By my estimate—the estimate annexed to the Concession—I am to receive one per cent. on the amount of the capital, or, in other words, the insignificant sum of twenty thousand pounds."

"It ought to have been more. You——"

"It is more," answered the foreigner, glancing significantly at Lempriere. "My estimate, as I have said, was prepared by me and my co-adjutors. How did I convince my Republic a capital of two millions was necessary? Well, you see, to illustrate the necessity, I presented a distracting array of figures, and I said many things to appease their scruples and preserve their confidence, and—er—er—they believed every word."

"The official mind of your Republic is uncommonly elastic."

"How could the official mind check my mind, which conceived and contained this scheme?"

"No doubt," said the ex-banker, smiling, "they could have coined some awkward questions."

"In my glorious Republic the official mind forgives the sin of accepting bribes and breeding corruption. Immediately an official suggested an increase to my estimate, from that moment he became my coadjutor."

The two gentlemen drained their glasses and exchanged amicable glances.

"I was constrained," continued the imperturbable Italian, "to pose before my Republic as a patriot, and so I feigned to be content with my puny commission. But my estimate was my saviour. Alas, how like a lovely woman is that fickle estimate! To human vision the woman is pure and captivating, but concealed beneath her charms are germs of infidelity. So with my bewitching estimate. To the eye of my Republic it is immaculate, but concealed in its proportions are interstices of profit which you and I, my friend, may enjoy at our leisure."

"And on which the guarantee of your Republic will fall?"

"Precisely," assented the foreigner. "Why not?"

"Well, I was thinking——"

"Don't!—at least, never in—er—a matter like this. Why should we? Will not my glorious Republic gain immensely by this scheme?"

"Probably; but any other man with your opportunities——"

"Would not have succeeded. The essence of the art of deceiving others is first to hoodwink yourself. I gammoned myself this scheme would succeed beyond the dreams of extravagance. I stored my imagination with visions of vast results to my compatriots, and—er—er——"

"Now, tell me, Corelli," hastily interrupted Lempriere, "why you pretend to act the part of a patriot?"

"I aspire to hold a portfolio in the ministry of my Republic."

Lempriere was instantly overcome with sympathy. Was he not a senator who suffered the twitchings of envy? Was he not cultivating a bloom predestined to flower into ambition? Was he not secretly comparing and contrasting members of Her Majesty's Ministry with himself? Aye, really: nor was he ashamed to own it—to himself.

"I was moved," said Corelli, "to obtain my Concession by the prompting of ambition. I was a merchant; I am now a politician. Money has radiant features; but, tiring of her smiles, you turn to ambition."

"It is a noble passion."

"When nobly pursued," cried Corelli, laying a hand on his heart.

Lempriere, looking a long way off, failed for several seconds to realise his surroundings.

"Now, Corelli, putting humbug aside, suppose your countrymen were to find out they had been fleeced by your estimate?"

"It would not matter a pin."

"Then why play the patriot?"

"Because I love novelty."

"Hum—er—hum," murmured the ex-banker musingly.

"In my glorious Republic corruption is accounted a trifle. It is a sort of fashion—concealed, of course—permeating our political fabric. Not that we confess to our deviations. Oh, dear no. That weakness would be too provoking. Our plan is to cloak artifice with dissembled fairness. Every man knows his neighbour will strive to undermine him—being himself conscious of a similar inclination. It follows, everybody is strategic—everybody on his guard. Being part of our national conduct, the danger is minimised, the inconvenience scarcely felt. If I apologise for my glorious Republic, it is because I am addressing an Englishman. We regard life as a game—you as a serious purpose. We are alert and crafty—you moderate and straightforward."

Corelli ceased, and returning to his cigar lost himself in appropriate reverie. Lempriere, having begun to listen in amazement, subdued his emotion to surprise, and was soon restored to equability and reinstated in comfort. He recalled the rules of business proportion, and revived moral curiosities esteemed strictly commercial. On the whole he inferred that an impartial visit to Capel Court would cure misconception of British obtuseness.

"Then," remarked Lempriere, emerging from

reflection, "we only have to fear the investor."

"And your joint stock laws."

It is needless to portray the plan of burying these accomplished conspirators among the totals of that bloated estimate. The concession was sold with the usual artistic trickery—was sold, re-sold, sold again, the price leaping with every digital move—mounting on golden wings to a highly inflated finish. Everybody was swindled —everybody satisfied—the plot having proceeded on fashionable lines. But a day will come when —no matter!

CHAPTER V

"How many years have you known Mr. Lambert, papa?" inquired Josephine.

"Ever since I was a boy, my dear."

"He looks a very old gentleman."

"Getting on for seventy. But the lawyer is celebrated for long life. He avoids worry—unless it belongs to somebody else, when it is too precious to disregard."

"A strange profession," rejoined Miss Lempriere. "Lawyers exist on the misery and misfortune of mankind. Aunt Fleecemewell says they are always inventing disputes, and ——"

"A silly notion, my dear. The lawyer is a sort of undertaker to the living—he inters disputes."

"And never rakes them up?"

"There is no occasion. The composition of our social system is too combustible to need a lawyer to start an explosion. Jealousies and vindictiveness ignite in an instant, and men friendly one night are foes the next. Parents and children are flung into conflict, bite each other's heads off, and—er—eat them, too," added Lempriere, inadvertently smacking his lips.

"But, papa," pursued Josephine, congratulating herself, and the United Kingdom, that her eloquent parent was in Parliament, "the lawyer

cannot allay ill-feeling by casting estates into Chancery."

"Indeed, he can, my love," returned the member for Breeze, contracting a legislative frown. "The law is a process whereby tempers are tamed. A lion trying to kill his keeper is cooled with red-hot iron. A man declining to do the right thing, in the right spirit, at the right time, is reconciled to his duty by legal coercion—the sobriety of his submission being due to compulsion. Then if a husband and wife ——"

"But a husband would never ——"

"Beat his wife? Well, matrimonial complications are peculiar. Sometimes the fray is one-sided, sometimes mutual. In the latter instance each yearns for the solace of divorce, and a little imperceptible perjury secures the desired separation."

"It is very wicked to aid people to commit perjury."

Lempriere had many legal friends, and rejoiced in their society. Their anecdotes were broad, their jokes racy, well seasoned, well delivered—very enjoyable. Then they were so useful, defining perilous pitfalls in the paths of financial explorers. So, after a spell of inward debate, he assured his beloved child lawyers were neither Apollos nor Pagans, appreciating vice and pleasure very much as other people, and capable of varnishing their sins with the unction of special pleading.

Mr. Lempriere was quitting the room when he

ran against George Lambert junior, son and heir of the gentleman whose personality had inspired the foregoing dialogue. The young lawyer—he was only thirty—was a frequent visitor, his interviews, especially with Josephine, being more friendly than professional. Lempriere scented no objection. The Lambert practice was splendid, and a solicitor son-in-law always at his elbow might be an acquisition.

The greeting between the young and the elderly was speedily over. Lempriere was off to a Board meeting—two guineas hanging to it—with a champagne luncheon thrown in at the finish.

"So you see a good deal of Victor Corelli," said Lambert junior, after some interesting passages of introductory.

"Yes, he is often here. Papa thinks he will strike a figure in the future policy of his Republic."

"Does he still play the *rôle* of patriot?" smiled the lawyer.

"I have observed," answered the lady, thoughtfully, "that after dinner, when he and papa have lingered over dessert, his great Concession makes a noise in the drawing-room."

"And then his love of country overflows?"

"Is quite a cataract," replied the girl, demurely.

"Ah! he is a curious man."

"An Italian who, adoring art and despising trade, had to abandon the ideal for the profits of the practical."

"He quitted Italy when young, so rumour says, and became a naturalised South American citizen. Some people, the busybodies chiefly, suggest he is a little under a cloud."

"If true, would that disqualify him——"

"Would do nothing so unkind," interjected Lambert, divining his companion's surmise. "He is within the charmed circle of Society, a gratifying guarantee of respectability."

"I have sometimes thought otherwise."

"Well, it is, at least, equal to a bank balance. The balance is no indication of a correctly dissimulated career, but the approving glance of Society ratifies the semblance of a just moral deportment."

Miss Lempriere sighed pensively. Even George Lambert junior was very worldly.

"You wish me to explain this Concession?" asked the young lawyer, making ready to prolong his visit. "Nothing would please me more," he continued, with animation. Nor was he sententious in his narration, the intrusion of the ghost of the tender passion being responsible for irrelevant excursions.

"Corelli, having acquired riches, grew weary of commercial exclusiveness, longing for diversion and renown by coquetting with Republican politics. Commercial enterprise is the ruling passion of his Republic, and anybody seeming to incur sacrifice to extend its possibilities is hailed as a hero by the giddy populace. Corelli perceived he could easily win the acclamation of his countrymen by

endeavouring to open up a large undeveloped province to the adventurous spirit of the merchant. Forming a party of explorers, he penetrated into the interior and projected a railway, which, it is predicted, will marvellously extend mercantile effort."

"And what happened after he had explored?"

"He offered to disclose his scheme if his Republic would grant him a concession."

"But how is a concession so valuable?"

"Well, you see, a concessionaire is nearly identical in character with a patentee—the former owning a concession, the latter a patent. The concessionaire has disclosed a scheme, the patentee has divulged an invention. One may be as mad as the other—that often signifying little. The madder the plan, the more it may impress the malleable investor. But to return. Just as the patentee acquires control over his invention, so the concessionaire gains power over his project. Corelli's scheme is valuable ——"

"Then why is he anxious about papa's influence?"

"Because he wants to be introduced to certain financiers."

"What will they do?"

"Fleece him if they can."

"How shocking!"

"No, really, because so common," said Lambert, smiling his business smile.

"Are financiers indifferent to honour?"

"They like it wherever found, much preferring to find than to provide."

"That is saying little to extenuate."

"Commercial morality stringently exacts that every man should be competent to take care of himself. Mr. Fuddlehead, omitting to distinguish gold from brass, must not look for ethical sign-posts in Lombard Street. Cash is the god of the greatest city in the world, and pride of pelf is on his right hand. Thus enthroned, votaries sacrifice virtue on his altars to widen his sway and extend his blessings."

The young lady and gentleman changed the strain of their dialogue. Militant opinions of cash and concessions no longer inhabited their breasts. The imbecilities of pride dwelt no more in their memories. Their manner became extremely interesting, their faces enchantingly expressive; but as their voices dropped into the inaudible I cannot convey their ensuing conversation.

CHAPTER VI

THE Silly Season was slowing its erratic pendulum, and the Ministerial performers in the noisy game of governing the British Empire were shaking themselves into condition in different climates of the globe. One was eating curry in Calcutta; a second killing crocodiles in Africa; a third, in Iceland, comparing geysers with debates; a fourth, far north, climbing the Pole. Each was restored to his family except the last. It was said he was only half-way up, and when he reached the top he meant to stick there.

Lempriere and Corelli had completed their plan for gulling the glorious Republic. Such artful designs were accounted clever in those indifferent days. They were popular until they exploded and submerged multitudes in the waves of ruin. The essence of fraud is its fantastic invisibility by virtue of subtlety. It was a fine art with those who worshipped the acme of metallic currency, and cared not how it was got so long as strategy was neatly severed from criminal jurisdiction. We are more austere now, because, indeed, the cheat is not so easily veiled. Joint Stock Law is less pliant, and compels cupidity to subsist within temperate latitudes of restraint.

The Concession—a stupendous triumph—was winging its gleeful way into limited liability—was the central figure of an eloquent prospectus; and a thirsting public would soon be scrambling for copious allotments. Cautious steering had guided the scheme from the sumptuous sanctum of the capitalist into the umbrageous avenues leading to Joint Stock limitations; but, being an adventure with interest guaranteed by a glorious Republic, it needed no privileged mendacity to float it fairly on the English market.

Within the walls of a swagger hotel, four gentlemen were gaily dining. The party recognised and revered the convivial hour. Their merriment was excellent—their wit as wicked as the wine. Every mood was mellow, every whim a fancy. It is harrowing to think their jokes, which banished waiters into corners to release their pent-up mirth, were allowed to sink for ever in the voiceless abyss of oblivion.

What meant this festive entertainment—this random sociability yielding to the sway of Bacchus? It was indeed a frolicsome celebration of the exuberance of mutual satisfaction. Four men were delighted with the rare fruits plucked from a great Concession, and were invoking the generous grape to stimulate their gratitude.

"Gentlemen," said a soft foreign voice, "let us drink to the prosperity of my glorious Republic."

"And to her honour," chimed in Lempriere.

"Aye," sarcastically added Lambert senior,

"but only by her prosperity will she honour her guarantee."

"Nations," remarked Corelli, shrugging his shoulders, "are like individuals—honest while Providence smiles. Immediately she frowns they sneer at the wisdom of rectitude. And why not?" inquired the foreigner, looking quizzically round. "Is it not decreed by natural law that nobody should starve? If I hunger, and my neighbour has a loaf he cannot eat, is it not by natural law confiscated to me? If you English have more money than you need, should not my glorious Republic, being financially famished, consume it for her comfort?"

"Then an excess of riches justifies appropriation of the surplus by a penurious stranger?" suggested Lambert senior, looking philosophic.

"*Vraiment.* Be honest as long as you can. When fortune changes, turn rogue and plead the law of nature."

"And be ruled out of court by the authority of——"

"I have authority," urged Corelli, dramatically lifting his arm. "A great poet in famous lines declares that—

> 'They shall take who have the power,
> And they shall keep who can.'"

"Which," said Lambert junior, cruelly imposing on Corelli, "refers to the omnipotent collector of taxes."

"But your estimable bard says—'They shall keep who can!'"

"Meaning the unhappy tax-payer with his one chance of evasion."

"And that is——"

"A clean pair of heels, and no portable property."

"Let us drink to the downfall of despotism," laughingly cried Corelli.

"I give the next toast," said Lempriere, winking merrily at the Lamberts. "Heaven bless the lawyers."

"Stop! stop!" exclaimed the foreigner, feigning lively alarm. "Pray modify the exhortation. Blessings are precious, and heaven has limits."

"We surely deserve a few," urged Lambert junior, highly amused.

"A few!" said Corelli, casting up his eyes. "Your irrepressible fraternity—like flies you are everywhere—need manifold benedictions; and ——"

"Well, give my father and me as many as may be valued at six-and-eightpence."

"Is there any origin to that eccentric figure?" asked Lempriere, raising his glass to depress any dryness in the answer.

"The origin," said Lambert senior, clearing his throat and mocking pomposity, "is folded in the impenetrable past; but this ancient verse has travelled down through ages:—

One shilling for myself,
Another for my clerk,
A third for saving shelf,
A fourth for freakish lark;

A fifth I will apply
To wants I can't deny;
The sixth to what I will,
According to my skill;
And then—before too late—
Unto my wife—
My life of life—
I give the pennies eight."

"In my glorious Republic the lawyer earns his fee immediately he looks at you—he receives it in advance. What is the effect? The successful litigant only feels two flights of emotion—grief at the beginning, joy at the finish. In England he suffers three ecstasies—confidence as he starts, rapture as he wins, sorrow as he pays."

"The difference seems to be," said Lempriere learnedly, "that in your country the client knows his fate when he has forgotten the fee, but here he pays the fee when he has forgotten his fate."

"Ah, my friend, what a fee you will be working for when you arrive at melancholy Murkwoop. What a place!—Murkwoop! Had you the gift of poesy you might catch inspiration from solitude and write a tragedy full of thrilling situations."

"I shall not be so lonely as you suppose. Murkwoop has a reputation for ghosts; so I shall have a society that keeps society hours."

This turn of the conversation immediately dispatched the party into a digression on goblins —on apparitions and their causes. Intoxication, it was told, developed grotesque fancies; and a smattering of delirium tremens created comedies of wild cats and contorted bedposts into reptiles.

Then ghosts and their vagaries led to weird revelations, all vouched and sealed by vocal emphasis.

"I once heard," said Lambert junior, "an incredible story of a vision. It was told by a native of Naples. A girl of that city was so villainously betrayed that her ruiner was reviled and hounded from the place. Soon after, the girl—deserted and in poverty—died in misery. Her seducer wandered through different climes; but, wherever he went, on the night of the anniversary of his victim's death her vision appeared and warned him the dagger of an assassin would avenge her. Dreading the haunting return of this terrifying apparition he spent the night gambling in a noisy casino. But there loomed the fateful phantom; and while it stayed—in spite of frenzied play and reckless hazards—his luck was supreme, his play invincible. At break of dawn he sallied forth, his brain dazed, his pockets gorged with gold. Two hours later his body was discovered—stabbed in the back—all his winnings gone!"

"Are you ill?" cried Lambert senior, turning to the Italian.

"The heat of the room—nothing more," gasped the foreigner, whose face was ashen. Painfully disturbed, he lifted a decanter, filled a glass, and tremblingly tossed the brandy down his throat.

"What made you recite the tale of the poor Naples girl in that dramatic fashion?" inquired

old Lambert of his son as they strolled from the swagger hotel.

"I did not intend histrionic action. That decoration was an accident."

"I observed Corelli didn't relish the conversation when it veered to the supernatural. I cannot understand fear arising from visions—the common result of a disordered liver. Depend upon it," said the practical old gentleman, "if that man funks the shifting shadows of his imagination, jaundice is at the bottom of the business."

CHAPTER VII

Lempriere was denied the salubrious precaution of passing the winter at Cannes, the air and scenery of Murkwoop being substituted. Although debarred from indulging his mood, he flattered himself he might find the moor a congenial area for sport. Yes, indeed, he might enjoy the privilege of shooting over Murkwoop repeatedly, and find an unconquerable difficulty in hitting—excepting the mansion—any material object. Nevertheless, he promised himself to persevere and subject his patience to prolonged and salutary drilling.

Frogmore's famous bequest was a prime topic for impertinent gossip and garrulous conjecture. Lempriere's friends quizzed and queried, and wished they wore his boots. Manufacturers of specious paragraphs for periodicals prying into affairs of prominent people had splendid opportunities of puffing the public with edifying theories and engaging conclusions. The legatee's popularity was immense—his audience joining in a chorus of congratulation too profound for words. Wherever he went vacant obtrusion or gaping curiosity crossed his path or barred his passage. Pomposity button-holed him; interviewers dodged

him; calculating Yankees guessed him worth exploiting. Lempriere suffered with superlative equanimity. He was pleasant during chaff; calm under catechism; mute towards periodicals. He sent guns, books, and horses to Murkwoop, and prepared to follow with factitious resignation.

Lempriere imagined he would study and assimilate subjects he had hitherto merely skimmed. Though no lover of books, he regarded them respectfully. Society enjoined a certain conversance with literature, to screen its votaries from the imputation of ignorance, and the ex-banker's acquaintance with authors was sufficiently superficial to win audible applause in the circuit of small-talk.

On the last day of November Lempriere was pacing the platform of the station of B——, the village nearest Murkwoop, pining for the appearance of Job Jenkins. He paced and chafed, watched and waited, and now and then picked a word from his private vocabulary to mollify his irritation. An hour expired, and still no sign of Jenkins. Determining to travel alone, he astonished the station-master by enquiring the shortest road to Murkwoop. Had he asked for the Eddystone Lighthouse he could not have occasioned greater amazement. Request a person to direct you in London, and you are sent interminably right and left until the torture of turnings drives you distracted; but to seek the briefest path across a trackless moor was as racy as if—well——. The veteran of the village had

heard distantly of Murkwoop, but only as a sweep of country infested by footpads. Carefully storing this enlivening detail, Lempriere, bestowing some trifles on attentive porters, obtained refuge at the crack inn, bearing the sign of "The Bell." Two hours later, as he was poising a glass of port between his eye and the lamp, a low knock was dealt on the door, which, opening, admitted an elderly man attired in clothes that seemed to divide his duties between garden and stable.

Job Jenkins was the only male servant at Murkwoop. Frogmore, in the flesh, was a diminutive man with limited wants. He deputed Job to rule the estate and stable, and to Job's wife he consigned the cares of the household. He rubbed along life at Murkwoop many years, but at last Job turned physician and Mrs. Jenkins nurse. Frogmore refused to see a medical man, a freak that resulted in an inquest. But we are forgetting the guest at "The Bell." Jenkins stood inspecting Lempriere as he might have studied a specimen of horse flesh, presenting to the latter a muscular figure, modified by a stoop, shrewd and furrowed features, with hair and whiskers cut close and iron grey.

"I ask your pardon, sir," said Jenkins, in hard but respectful tones. "I didn't get your letter until half-an-hour ago."

"Half-an-hour ago!" exclaimed Lempriere.

"Yes, sir. I happened to be in the village with the dog-cart, and called at the post-office. Letters are never delivered at Murkwoop."

"How did Mr. Frogmore get his?"

"He never had any."

Lempriere groaned enviously in spirit.

"But I am a Member of Parliament, and must keep in touch with my borough."

"I think," said Job, rubbing his chin reflectively, "I can get the son of the landlord of this inn to bring over your letters. But he must only be paid on delivery; else he might get drunk and drop them into a ditch."

Lempriere loved his constituents, but rebelled at their epistolary insolence. He managed to neutralise its intolerance by oily notes and simpering post-cards; but notwithstanding his cleverness in evasion—of which he was growing unfeignedly proud—he conceived an accommodating ditch might fittingly inter many missives indited from the borough of Breeze.

"Yes, sir," resumed Jenkins, "Tom Butcher is a boosing fellow, and a worry to his old father. Howsoever, sir, I will get him to bring over your letters, if you are willing."

Lempriere was quite willing, venturing to buoy up the hope—assisted by an extra glass of port—that a kindly ditch might still extinguish sundry batches of troublesome correspondence.

The drive to Murkwoop was dreary and fretful. The moon was hidden; the stars were obscured; a light mist veiled the face of nature. Somewhat depressed—the pleasing effects of the port having fled—Lempriere strained his eyes, but every trace of outline was shrouded, space and stillness filling

the passing scene. Suddenly the noiselessness of the wheels and a swaying motion apprised him he was speeding over moorland. Not a sound broke the solitude save the thud of the horse's hoofs. Miles and moments swiftly flew, and still the travellers dashed along. A towering object loomed —the cart stopped—Job jumped down. A challenge was screamed, a dog growled, bolts and doors receded and yielded—a waving lantern greeting the guest as he passed the portals of Murkwoop.

CHAPTER VIII

THE mansion of Murkwoop was a massive structure surrounded with a wide courtyard. Lofty and ugly, it was, as are many giants, extremely modest, the enclosing walls completely concealing the lower windows. A spacious gateway faced north, while an entrance of lesser dimensions pierced the southern wall. Apart from its solidarity it presented nothing to excite comment, save a broad verandah girding the entire building. Whether the architect imagined occupiers of this graceless abode would need abundant exercise to counteract the freezing effects of residence, or would never tire of contemplating the unrefreshing tameness of the moor, were points of speculation unassisted by physical testimony. Nevertheless he had determined to gratify people possessing active or meditative tastes, since the verandah affixed to the first floor was broad enough to permit pedestrians to perambulate or ruminate without jostling into disputes concerning the area of elbow room.

The morning after his ride in the dog-cart, Lempriere was roaming the verandah striving to appreciate the aspect. He was unsuccessful, and was dismissing a whiff of cigar smoke with a

sigh of discontent, when a prim little woman confronted him, sweeping a prim little curtsey, and tipping a prim little smile. She was a neat sample of the precise housekeeper, wearing plain black, a muslin cap, and a bunch of keys dangling at her waist. Far from tall, she insisted she was anything but short; and her face, though confessing to age, was pleasant and healthy. Altogether she embodied a picturesque specimen of domestic nattiness and household integrity.

Lempriere eyed his cook, chambermaid, and housekeeper with curiosity. He thought he should like her, having no lurking fear she would doctor his soup, or play vicious pranks with side dishes. He felt sure she would air his shirts, and keep him from damp beds; and, in the fewest of minutes, he got confident that Mrs. Jenkins really included Mr. Jenkins, and that the latter in the presence of the former would always be neatly extinguished.

The hall of Murkwoop was roomy and square, and resounded the ticking of an eight-day clock. An ample staircase landed the climber in a gallery traversing the mansion from each extremity, the rooms on one side being allotted to Lempriere, and those on the other sealed and inaccessible. The rest of the house, except the apartments occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins, seemed wrapped in silence and guarded from intrusion. Lempriere's rambles within were confined, indeed, to the staircase, the gallery, and the hall—his excursions outside being conducted in the court-

yard, or on the soft surface of the sombre moor.

Lempriere's life at Murkwoop was absolutely free from bustle and excitement. Amusement was a difficulty, but occupation easier. He wiled away some tedious hours over books. He began by believing he was interested in Childe Harold; but the wandering Childe was speedily abandoned for the unblushing Don Juan. Then followed the prodigalities of Peregrine Pickle, and the riotous blundering of Roderick Random—the chivalries of Don Quixote being specially digested. He fancied he was budding into an introspective reader, and congratulated himself accordingly. Plus these serious tasks, he wrote regularly to his daughter, read the London newspapers unflaggingly, and replied, with a politeness he seldom felt, to epistolary pulings of querulous constituents.

Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins had their daily duties, and were not gifted with conversational instincts. Job was taciturn, and, when he spoke, was rather blunt. Still he was a useful man—grooming horses, making bread, mending stockings, milking the cow. Mrs. Jenkins was always astir, always spruce, always busy—a good cook, a good maid, a good woman—always bobbing a prim little curtsey, always tipping a prim little smile.

Frowning December was over, and gloomy January was dragging its tiresome pace. Lempriere was dejected, but not disconsolate. Already he was anticipating the relief in expectancy to be afforded by his daughter's society. Twice had he

met her at B—, a trysting place to which she was escorted by the gallant old family lawyer. Immense was the happiness of those moments; many were the witticisms of genial Lambert senior; sad and heavy was the journey back over the moor to Murkwoop.

Lempriere's electoral letters did not receive decent extinction in a roadside ditch. Tom Butcher was regular in his intervals of intoxication; but the correspondence continued, his ill-used parent being converted into deputy messenger. Tom was a local curiosity. A firm believer in specific periods of dissipation and recurring circuits of sobriety, he would disappear for a fortnight into lush, and, re-appearing thoroughly soaked, would recuperate by steady exercise and strict abstinence. It was during one of his swilling recreations that old Butcher brought the letters to Murkwoop and poured bitter complaints into Lempriere's sympathising ear.

"I gave that boy a good education, yet he cannot keep away from the drink. What is the use, sir, of learning the rule of three, unless it teaches you to save money, keep steady, and marry and populate the country?"

This peculiar problem in proportion had never been studied by Lempriere.

"And, sir," continued the innkeeper, "does not grammar forbid bad language and the telling of wicked stories?"

Lempriere started visibly and forced a smile.

Why? Had the Member for Breeze broken these novel aims of grammar?

"Now, sir," said Butcher, employing solemn emphasis, "I should like to know whether you think it right for a gentleman to be walking about with a pretty village wench and making believe to be courting her for the bond of holy wedlock?"

Lempriere was fifty-five, and a father, and, whatever his predilections to pretty women, he could not condone the folly of allowing the world to witness a weakness. He therefore frankly discountenanced all such irregular displays.

"Well, sir," said Butcher, "you will pardon me for mentioning it, but your friend, Mr. Victor Corelli, goes gadding about with a girl named Mary Maguire. She is a fast and silly little wench, I admit; but then, sir, Mr. Corelli has the mind and ought to know better. I have nothing else to say against him. He has stayed at my inn many times, and has always been most liberal. My wife took the liberty, sir, to hint at what he was doing, in a gentle sort of way; but lor, sir, he only laughed, and said it was what they all did in his glorious Republic. Howsoever, sir, wrong will come of it—and sin, too, sir; and perhaps, sir, there will be crime, sir—yes, sir, crime!" with which prophetic peroration Butcher departed like an injured elephant.

Lempriere was a little irritated at the indiscretion of his friend. The Italian had frequently visited "The Bell," matters touching the division of spoils of the great Concession having brought

him intermittently to B——. More than once he had prolonged his stay at the inn, avowing himself enchanted with the wintry aspect of the sylvan surroundings. It seemed to Lempriere's sagacity that the aspect in chief was Miss Mary Maguire.

"Oh, the humbug of the world!" muttered the ex-banker. "But, after all," he mused, speaking beneath his breath and helping himself to a cigar, "Corelli's diversion was not so very deucedly unpleasant."

Who was Mary Maguire? A pretty female residing at B——, who supported herself by dressmaking. This pursuit, esteemed an art, excited the local envy of her sex; and, no aspirant in the village rivalling her skill, she stood practically first and last in the monopoly of manipulating bodices and skirts. Being independent, she regulated her reputation very much as she pleased. It had been successfully soldered in the unregretted past; but if she chose to impair it afresh, what did it matter to anyone? So long as she sinned respectably and paid her way, who had a right to complain?

If a woman is pretty, it is immaterial whether she is worthless. Admirers will abound — jealousies will uprise. So it was with Mary Maguire. She cast her glances freely about her, but they settled nowhere steadily. If one man was her favourite, it was boosy Tom Butcher. He was better educated than the rest of her adorers, and so he satisfied some feathery whim affecting this fickle young lady.

When Corelli, with his bland manners and foreign accent, entered the village, Mary Maguire was instantly smitten. Conscious of her charms she cast herself in his way. Willing to be amused he softly played the amiable. They speedily indorsed mutual opinions of undisguised import, and basked in the blissful tête-a-tête with alternatives in spooning.

Corelli's interloping created a fine uproar among Mary's crowd of cajoled serfs. They vented valorous threats, declaring he should be shipped back in a box of questionable shape to the shores of his glorious Republic. Tom Butcher was particularly truculent, breathing bitter imprecations into the interior of empty beer tankards. Mary, persisting in her frolic, treated them all with queenly contempt, acting the part of the pert tyrant with vivacious grace and address.

Lempriere drove over to B—— to make private inquiries. After dry investigation—the mind of the man of the world predominating—he dismissed his apprehensions of Corelli's indiscreetness, thinking, possibly, that old Butcher was too pious for an innkeeper, and a bit over-meddlesome in the matters of his neighbours.

As time crept along, Lempriere became conscious of a growing sense of oppression. It stuffed up his chest, invaded his head, and flitted about the region of his stomach. What could it mean? Did Murkwoop disagree with his liver? Horrid thought! A sluggish liver and he in the fifties? Not if he knew it! Perish lucre!

Legacies were common—livers were not. Jaundice and beastly waters in Bath pump-rooms were past a joke. Oddly enough, his complaint worried him mostly at night. If he was dismayed —it was his shadow. Whenever he started—it was his footfall. He was vastly uneasy, imagining himself a prey to an insidious disorder, and thinking very feelingly of physicians, their stuffs, and their fees.

One evening, buried in his arm-chair, gazing indolently into the fire, and musing on the symptoms of his ailment, he suddenly hit upon both cause and remedy. Physical exercise—a simple but potent prescription—was the cure his case commanded. Yes—his frame needed the salutary agitation of pedestrian drill before he retired to rest. Acting on this happy solution of constitutional difficulties, he wrapped himself in his greatcoat, and arming himself with a stick, started at a brisk pace across the moor. A deadly darkness and silence rendered the situation grimly impressive; but, clutching well his stick, Lempriere worked his blood into excellent circulation. Feeling easier, and cogitating on the equable tenor of mind that results from resolve to shun fancied evils, he bravely pushed ahead. But what was that? A stealthy step was stealing along—was near, nay, almost on him! He was no coward, but, well, he was unnerved — a bewitched listener—doubting, perhaps dreading, and deciding on discreet, not desperate, resistance. Something was moving, he was sure. What was

it? He might challenge—"Halloo! who the deuce are you?" Not a valiant defiance, but heroic enough for noise. Why was he feeling queer? Was he really rooted to the ground? He was wondering, when a figure clad in cloak and hood stood almost at his elbow. Awaiting a genteel salutation, Lempriere remained motionless; but the mysterious wayfarer was mute, and sweeping along with stately strides melted from sight on the soundless moor.

"What!" exclaimed the incensed M.P., gasping intense relief. "A figure pass the Member for Breeze in that form?" Turning round, he started in pursuit. In vain!—too late! He had plenty of pluck, but, like disarranged furniture, it wasn't in order, and the speechless inhabitant of cloak and hood had vanished unquestioned into the shadows of night.

The extraordinary encounter just narrated engendered annoyance in Lempriere's fearless breast. He reproached himself for his lack of expedition. Why, he asked himself, was he so long ere he began the chase? Ah! why? However, to make amends he would walk the moor the following night, and if he met the suspicious stranger, he would confront him. What right, quoth Lempriere, had anyone to prowl the moor in that ghostly guise? A cloak and hood indeed! Honesty needed no unusual attire, and dishonesty should be called to account everywhere.

Once more the night was lowering. Again, Lempriere, grasping his stick, stood sentry on the

spot where the shrouded figure had passed. For several minutes he listened. Not a sound. The moor was impenetrably still. Hush! what was that? A thudding noise—thump, thump, thump! It was a horse's gallop — a horse going a tremendous pace. What could it be?—the owner of cloak and hood enjoying equestrian exercise? Presently he distinguished horse and rider swiftly approaching. Hailing loudly—he did not reckon it pleasant to be ridden down and trampled—the steed was reined in, and the horseman bent in his saddle.

"Why are you wandering about Murkwoop?"

"Why are you?" curtly retorted Lempriere.

"That is my business."

"And my stroll is mine."

"I am in Her Majesty's service, and——"

"A Treasury detective, eh?"

"Oh, you are Basil Lempriere?"

"I may or may not be."

"You are Basil Lempriere? Yes? Well, I am interested in your welfare. You understand. Have the exceeding goodness to exchange cards."

"Why should we?"

"It will save trouble. Here is mine. Thank you. This is not a lively locality. Good-night." Clapping spurs to his horse, the man was out of sight in an instant.

"I wonder," pondered Lempriere, pensively entering the library, "whether that fellow in cloak and hood was a detective in disguise? Detectives are uncommonly cute. I remember hearing of

one who took a situation as cook. He was tolerably well up in culinary matters, but spoiled himself. He put some nasty stuff in a curry. It was an important dish, friends of the family having arrived from India. No sooner was that curry down than all the party rose. Doctors were summoned, stomach-pumps fetched — the cook fled. He had detectives after him, but ——" Lempriere finished his reverie by lifting a decanter. Finding it contained liquid of the approved colour, he took a tumbler and mechanically mixed whiskey and seltzer. Discussing this invaluable aid to reflection, he stepped to the verandah and surveyed the morose solitude. The sky was casting off layers of clouds, and the denseness of the night was lifting; but the desolate waste, stretching away everywhere, presented a frowning aspect. "Yes, the Treasury detective was quite right. This is not a lively locality."

Lempriere closed the casement, but did not draw the blinds. Dropping into his arm-chair, he stirred the fire. The library was a snug room, and the blaze on the hearth and the cosy surroundings conspired to foster a spirit of contentment. He sank into pleasing meditation on the approaching visit of his daughter, and remained wrapt in enjoyable reflection. Deeming it time to retire, he roused himself, and prepared for a languid departure. He only half rose. There, on the verandah, was that confounded detective in cloak and hood! The impudence of this espionage was exasperating! The ex-banker straightened himself

and went to the window. Stepping boldly forth, he confronted an intellectual face peering earnestly upon him from the ample depths of a capacious hood.

CHAPTER IX

"YES, Mr. Lempriere," said the singular visitor, sauntering into the library and casting back his hood, "I am your fellow prisoner in this retired tenement." The speaker was standing in a negligent attitude, regarding Lempriere with luminous eyes. His arms were gracefully folded, and the displaced hood brought to view a finely-moulded head.

"Then," said Lempriere, reviving from the shock of discovering such a handsome man, "you also are a legatee?"

"Not so fortunate," answered Gaspar St. John.

"You live here by choice?" incredulously cried the other.

"Aye," answered St. John, sighing. Lempriere also drew a long breath. "Years ago I abjured society, and, by right of purchase, came to reside here."

Lempriere glanced an unspeakable curiosity.

Gaspar St. John was tall and elegantly formed; and a high forehead, aquiline nose, and ascetic lips imparted force to a face lit with singularly luminous eyes. His complexion was clear, and he wore no trace of beard. Although possibly approaching fifty, his countenance was youthful, but his black hair was streaked with grey. His

clothes, beneath the cloak, were of dark material, the coat being shaped as a blouse. He was a student, an ardent thinker, a habit of life intensified by a natural lofty abstraction. For the rest, his voice was musical, his speech fluent and deliberate, his smile extremely winning.

"I am astonished," said Lempriere, "we have never met before."

"It is hardly to be wondered at. Frogmore's executors have sealed up the passage communicating with my rooms."

"Where are they?"

"On the floor above this."

Lempriere was mystified—not that he imagined his visitor had dropped from a window, or had used a rope ladder, or——

"I daresay," said St. John, divining this rational confusion of thought, "you marvelled at my unannounced appearance on the verandah?"

The ex-banker did not deny he had yielded to the sin of surprise.

"I am able to gain access to the verandah by a window of one of the sealed rooms on the eastern side—a staircase leading from my floor into that room."

"I have never met you on the moor, except—"

"I roam the moor at night."

"So do I—er—well—once—er——"

"Then I always use the southern gateway."

"And I the northern," remarked Lempriere, mentally resolving to alter his manner of exit.

"I fear I am a selfish recluse," said the

student, gazing at the books that stocked the library shelves.

Lempriere thought the same, but was too circumspect to confess. Still, he had passed six companionless weeks, while, forsooth, a conversational fellow was occupying the second floor, enjoying the very misery he detested, and preferring nocturnal rambles to matutinal strolls. This inequality of inclination touched him tenderly. He was not selfish—he was hurt.

"Yes," continued St. John, "I am a student, and love the solitude that maddens most mortals. Books are my friends—unchangeable in fidelity, never wanting in zeal. But the bookman is, perhaps, too exclusive—a willing slave to anchoretic leanings. It is natural; for he is a being who buries himself in folios and spurns the pastimes of life."

There was a silence, each man indulging a private reflection he secretely desired his companion to disturb.

"I frankly admit," said St. John, excusing the uninventiveness of his companion, "I had no wish to meet you. I dreaded inroads upon my studious industry. But now I avow I repent my disinclination, and hope we may join in subduing the monotony of Murkwoop."

The next morning the gentlemen breakfasted together. This led to other mutual meals, to strolls and cigars. The two, in a measure, were suited to each other. The ex-banker amused his friend with anecdotes culled from society, and gave

telling descriptions of spirited exploits in the fertile regions of finance. St. John, in turn, perplexed and staggered Lempriere; for, notwithstanding his compassion, the student could not invariably restrain his erudition. But he was no bore, and indirectly, and by elementary paths, beguiled the ex-banker into many lucid intervals. In the course of an entertaining fortnight the recluse renewed acquaintance with the high condition of the world he had abandoned; and the ex-banker bridged the thorny method of comprehending topics overlapping the level of average colloquialism.

The great Concession was trotted out for St. John's edification. All its advantages to the Republic were duly extolled—the benefits to the concessionaire and his satellites being duly kept *sub rosa*. Nobody should object to reticence. It is an excellent shroud for facts to be wrapped up and neatly tied and put aside for posterity to unfold. Only silly people clamour for universal veracity—as if one could persuade the tawdry upstart to admit how he sneaked from blank penury into redolent realms of lavish luxury! Others swell for an open mind—another name for a weak one. Ingenuousness is a capital trait; but to introduce it on a familiar footing into commercial combinations would bring all sound business to a standstill.

Lempriere had noticed the positive aversion nurtured by St. John towards Italians. What was the cause? Had the outrages of organ-

grinders driven him from the amenities of a West End Square? Had some haughty beauty of the sunny south enslaved his heart on purpose to jilt his hopes? Who could tell? Lempriere was not inquisitive, but——

A letter had come from Corelli, who had been invited to Murkwoop, stating he would pay his visit the next morning. Lempriere, having left the room to give necessary instructions to the Jenkinses, returned to discover St. John bending over the Italian's letter, his hands clenched, and his face a tempest of passion.

"Victor! Victor!" hissed the student, grinding his teeth—"a name that awakens a ferocity seasons of solitude should have quelled. Time imperfectly tames hate—blood alone, yes, yes, blood——" He paused and beheld Lempriere.

"I came here," said St. John, forcing himself to be calm, "to ask you to walk with me, and, by misadventure, I glanced at this signature. The sight of "Victor" aroused a fury I deemed dead. It is pent up merely—ready to stir at the slightest provocation. Listen! To reclaim myself from seeming folly, I must tell a tale of early life."

He was silent. Commencing, at length, he pursued his recital with effort.

"I was born in Naples, my father, an Englishman, being senior member of a financial house in that city. At his death I succeeded to a considerable fortune, and became guardian of an only sister. Always ardently studious, I ridiculed

social transports, and scorned the trifles which amuse mankind. Left my own master, I became infatuated with astronomy and philosophy, dedicating my days to occult speculation, my nights to watching the wonders of the limitless solar system."

The voice ceased, and the speaker paced pensively.

"Locked in the seclusion of my study, I passed days alone, discarding friendships, neglecting the duties of guardianship, leaving my sister, a beautiful girl, to choose her own life and intimates. I had a friend. His name was Gaspiani. We ofttimes met. His love of problems in astronomical science drew us together. He had a brother whose name was Victor—who was handsome, accomplished, insinuating. He met my sister — admired, loved, ruined her! It is idle to revile the seducer and the fatuous folly of his victim. Each is equally criminal. The man admits his villainy; the woman dares the risks of degradation. Neither yields to right suggestion. Neither avoids the fell companionship. Days pass, love quickens, sigh answers sigh—soon the killing blight descends."

St. John was silent—a gloomy regret mantling his brow.

"Had Victor Gaspiani atoned by matrimonial alliance, I could have forgiven his guilt. But, Mr. Lempriere," cried St. John, standing impressively before his listener, "the fiend entrapped

that frail girl while tied by the bonds of a secret marriage! Yes; he had clandestinely contracted an alliance with a woman of humble origin, and when my sister besought him to marry her, his answer was a confession of infamy. I was to meet him—he fled! That night my sister, seized with insanity, died the death of a suicide!"

The passionate man strode to the casement, and looked steadfastly at the unresponsive moor.

"I pursued that man for two years," said St. John, approaching close to Lempriere. "I meant to slay him. From country to country I tracked him, but, his cowardly instinct instructing him, he constantly eluded my search. At length, lost and shadowless to trace, no clue rewarded my efforts. My wanderings bringing me to Constantinople, I hazarded inquiries at the Italian Embassy. I learned — yes, I confess — with devilish delight, Victor Gaspiani had died in that city of Asiatic cholera!"

"I returned to Naples. I could not remain. I had conjured up hatred of Italy—of all Italians. Frank Frogmore had business relations with my family. I knew him well. We met. I told him all, how I pined for solitude, for forgetfulness, feeling bitterly my neglect of my sister had tended to her ruin. He offered me an asylum here. I accepted. Thus, Mr. Lempriere, you have the reason of my self-immurement in this distant mansion."

CHAPTER X

THIS is a chapter of love—sweet, bewitching, innocent love. Who shall portray the enslaving emotion?—who define its subtle illusion? A feat fitted for one who has roamed its dreary bliss, has sipped its magic elixir. The unromantic shun the conflicting ecstasy, decry its decoying distraction. Dash their ineradicable timidity! Why be shy of the sinuous conceit? Why eschew the dazzling enchantment?—or be inapt to paint its beauty or depict its deformity?

Yes—love is sweet; for pretty kisses, tender glances, and gentle sighs are the lover's stock-in-trade. It is also bewitching; easily wheedling the sentimental into the fanciful mazes of spooning. It is passing innocent — surely, beginning in folly, ending in confusion. And it is disappointing. Love in a cottage and no loaf is a grim picture — blotted out by a long leap, a brief struggle, and an inquest. Intoxicated and inalert, love makes ducks and drakes of the unconsidered future—crying for renewal of the time taken in tying the nuptial knot. What a strange physic! Once swallowed, nobody seeks a second dose. What a fickle flame!—for, despite fuel and fierceness, it is always snuffed out. Why? Ah!—why?

George Lambert junior was seated uncommonly close to Miss Josephine Lempriere, and that young lady was looking radiantly happy. Why? What in the world was the young gentleman saying? Did his remarks refer to her dear and absent papa? Had some accident befallen the family property? Yes—but not the real or personal. The family property under mishap was the heart of Miss Josephine Lempriere.

The fact was a great calamity was afflicting Josephine—the irrecoverable loss of exactly half her heart. She was feeling grieved and giddy, when Lambert junior mended her case with an even half of his. This restored her tottering balance and easily kept her straight.

The above exchange, or fusion of hearts, exhibited prudent foresight. Exchange it was, for Josephine's loss was the lawyer's theft. She only lost half—not the whole! He offered a moiety—not the bulk! But the foreign halves were very active, and the owner of each looked marvellously altered. Conversation was hushed into rippling murmurs—eyes were glistening, lips were meeting. The situation was very extraordinary, most interesting, extremely provoking!

That evening two young people were vastly cruel. They threw Mr. Lempriere into throes of distress. They explained their plan of happiness and invited him to subscribe to the undertaking. Poor Mr. Lempriere! The news drove him into many moods—from misery to despair,

from despair to the dangers of liquid grief. He launched in the sadness of approaching separation ; floated in the dulness of impending domestic solitude ; foundered in the prospect of sundered family ties. By degrees, however, he was buoyed into acquiescence. A winning whisper filled the breach of separation. A fondling arm forbade the dread of isolation. Affection unfading would never brook neglect. Yes, he would sometimes go to her home, be reminded of former times, and reconcile himself to the duties of a grandpapa. And should he marry again and make a mistake, he would debit his disgust—well, perhaps to himself.

CHAPTER XI

"Do congratulate me, Martella," cried Josephine, flinging her arms round a handsome woman, who returned the embrace while vainly attempting to conceal a cigarette.

"My—my dear ——"

"Never mind, Aunt. Don't hide your cigarette. I'll forgive you. I have my weakness, too. I've fallen in love. I'm going to be married!"

"Oh, Josephine, Josephine!" Martella could say no more—she resumed her cigarette.

"Yes, Martella, dearest. I'm going to be married—to—to—a solicitor."

Miss Seldon sprang to her feet, flinging her cigarette in the grate.

"A solicitor!" she cried, catching her breath.

"To George Lambert junior," demurely added the niece.

The aunt's manner changed.

"Engaged to good looks, a splendid practice—to—to—wealth—and—and—undoubted ancestry. Let me embrace you, dear, dearest Josephine."

Martella Seldon was full of sense and determination, the imperious owner of no ordinary reputation. She had travelled through time for thirty

years, and felt none the worse for the journey. Immersed in mundane affairs, she was hardly the person to plead to live in order to learn how to die. Not that she was wicked or unscrupulous, or ignored the bliss promised by futurity. Her character was merely dashed with hauteur, and interestingly unconventional. Balls and bustle and receptions and conversation crowded every hour; and at elections and public meetings her canvassing powers and speeches produced prized totals and faultless diction.

Apart from her claim to originality, Miss Seldon had striking personal qualifications. A fine forehead, firm nose, and rounded chin betokened the sterling characteristics she possessed; and her flashing eyes and thin lips inspired homage mingled with awe. Her masculine admirers resolved, without amendment, that she excelled in grace and dignity of deportment, their only indecision being whether to worship the woman, her wisdom, or her wealth.

Martella was first cousin to Lempriere, who (by means of a father, a legal entity tricked with the essentials of holy wedlock) was born nephew to Priscilla Lempriere, who married Jonathan Seldon. Priscilla and Jonathan perceived in each other at first sight the precise exposition of reciprocal sentiments. They mutually accepted life as probationary—wherein we are born to brief youth, to enter marriage, rear children, save money, make a will, expel a valedictory gasp

and expire into immaterial blessedness. This their simple creed, they united, and in due time were blessed with Martella. Afterwards, believing it useless to dawdle here below and relinquish (*pro tanto*) the rewards reserved above, Mr. Seldon sent for his lawyer and drew his will, and then was drawn to a churchyard from which he never returned. Later, his relict took to her bed—breathing her last in the presence of a prayer preferred by the specially retained household divine, and mingling with the great majority to search for her missing Jonathan.

Martella, her parents having withdrawn from terrestrial responsibility, exhibited at a comparatively early age tendencies of an emphatic type. She remained under guardianship until she was able to run alone; and a disposition to this style of progress disclosed itself promptly. It is manifest from tradesmen's bills that she arrayed herself in a remarkable outfit, and, accompanied by a lady full of languages, travelled through the countries of Europe. Her wanderings over, she returned, and, with her splendid fortune, made much intermittent display in London, Paris, and Vienna.

Miss Seldon had never encouraged offers of marriage. This was no wonder, her tastes being admittedly fastidious. Handsome heads, minus brains, she despised; and clever ones, competing with her own, she disliked. Modern art and literature bored her; and commercial eminence magnified her disdain. She aspired to ascend

demonstrably—to flutter before a marvelling public—to ventilate powers conspicuous and pronounced. Her heart—usually beating a dignified measure—throbbed responsively to the passionate peroration of the accomplished orator. She patronised celebrities who permitted the liberty, and endured mediocrity in moments of ennui. Authors, poets, and painters were welcomed in the ante-room of her sympathy; and explorers, owning books praising their exploits, received rare morsels of discriminating regard.

It might be surmised Miss Seldon was in danger of the doubtful privilege of interminable spinsterhood. Although she had never betrayed the slightest symptom of the tender passion, she had been suspected of casting connubial glances on Signor Victor Corelli. If true, motive, not love, formed the basis of her design—personal regard, suffused with self-interest, possibly supporting the superstructure.

Corelli had often visited Lempriere in Mayfair, and had willingly basked in Martella's smiles. But, if she aspired to be Lady President of his glorious Republic, he apparently was unprepared to gratify her aim. He was invincibly astute. A bachelor, his own master, he had no desire to be propped up and worried by a clever woman. He embraced a refined discretion—opposing a deferential ear to her lively assertiveness, a solemn unconsciousness to her mildest blandishment. Miss Seldon was not slow to perceive Corelli was no "catch"; so, bottling her chagrin

—if she had any fit for corking—she became a patient listener—a profound policy—to his crisp anecdotes and novel political principles.

Democratic institutions supplied the means for constant colloquial gymnastics in Mr. Lempriere's drawing-room. Cant clauses and kindred platitudes were examined and admired; while a dollar aristocracy and the sovereign value of the parvenu were debated by Corelli with unflagging animation. The insidious influence flowing from republican principles began to ramify Martella's mind; and by gentle but definite gradations she was sensible of a puzzling shiftiness in the sincerity of her convictions. She discovered her reverence for Royalty was undergoing silent disintegration; and insinuating encroachments were threatening her attachment to a blue-blooded aristocracy. These extraordinary departures from conservative latitudes startled and alarmed her; but she soon grew accustomed to the dizzy descents which perfected the modelling of her political conversion. New principles, if novel, are relished in any dressing; but, to give piquancy to the repast, the feasters must be appetized with ignorance. Thus fortified, they will swallow any quack monstrosity imposed by democratic dogmatism. Being new and noisy, the blatant theories are instantly popular—time for growth and cultivation not figuring in the reckoning. At the outset their collision with old tenets excites uproar; but repugnance subsides into contempt in proportion as it appears that bluster is the

background and hypocrisy the proscenium of an improvised stage of unrehearsed actors.

Martella Seldon was indolently reclining in the rocking chair which is the passion of frequenters of South American Hotels. She had banished herself to the privacy of her boudoir, and—ought we to tell tales?—was inhaling a delicately perfumed cigarette. Perhaps it was to cure a captious digestion, or was allaying some nervous excitement. Whichever excuse was uppermost, she puffed and rocked herself contentedly, and enjoyed the peculiar pleasure of unbroken abstraction.

"Yes," muttered Martella, "a new era is dawning, and I must change my tactics. Yes—I must marry! In these days of fashionable activity the fashionable spinster is a social anachronism. I thought differently once, but truth is indomitable. Marriage!" exclaimed Miss Seldon, vehemently puffing a perfumed cloud—"yes—marriage! I once dreamed I should unite myself to rank and intellect. I was the dupe of my fancy. Rank and intellect act, after all, very naturally. They make matches of affection and become responsible for families. Ah—I have no claim to motherhood. Children, at best, are tiresome distractions. I have lost nothing by missing to capture an embryo Lord Chancellor. No, indeed—I am a gainer. I have escaped the misery of rearing the usual brood of boobies. How charily clever parents bestow their abilities upon their progeny! Position? Well, yes, I have certainly missed

that. But in these democratic days political office fails to fascinate imagination. The poetry of publicity has vanished. What care the crowd for the Premier disinclined to simulate the art of the demagogue? And what now is political eloquence? An insufferable volume of trite commonplaces, vapid pledges, and fabricated abuse. Eloquence everywhere is in chronic decline. The stuff used at the bar is fast wearing to rags, if it is not already in tatters. Why think of titled estates?—wincing under the plague of threatened confiscation. Far better hard cash—free from perils of the contagion. No—titles are tawdry playthings. Progress and science mainstay communities, the foundation of these being wealth. Without wealth, their forces would spend themselves in vain. Wealth holds honourable place; it is playing a conspicuous part. My wealth joined to Corelli's—he President of his glorious Republic—his talents shining—and—I——"

The enlightened sentence was never finished. The door of the boudoir opened, and, ere she could hide her cigarette, Martella was returning the embrace of Josephine Lempriere.

"Yes, Aunt," said the niece, "I am going to be married to the most amiable lawyer in London."

"Ah, Josephine, I hope his head is equal to his heart."

Josephine had no doubt about the heart, and less about the head.

CHAPTER XII

"And so, my dear Lempriere," said Corelli, in his soft foreign accent, "this is one of the days set apart by your singular relative for the reception of visitors?"

"For the reception of one visitor. I may only receive one a month from the outside world."

"From what other world would you have one?"

"There is a Mr. St. John living here whom I may meet."

"St. John!" echoed Corelli, thoughtfully stroking his moustache.

"Otherwise, I may meet nobody within these walls."

"Strange — most strange," murmured the foreigner, stepping to the verandah and surveying the moor.

"What do you think of the view?"

"Sad looking—very."

Lempriere, folding his arms resignedly, nodded assent.

"Ah," said the Italian, finishing a wistful study, "have care, my friend, lest this life of solitude sow the seeds of incurable melancholy."

Lempriere sighed and laughed, and proposed they should inspect the accessible portions of the house. Corelli was amazed at the structure, and noticing the resolute ugliness of everything, inquired whether the architect was a genius. As this information was wanting, he continued to gaze and ruminate. Lempriere and Jenkins, when applied to, only shook their heads; and finally the foreigner, being of the same mind, gravely shook his.

"Let us have a stroll on the moor," said Lempriere, leading the Italian through the gateway.

"Ah, my dear friend!" cried Corelli, employing his favourite phrase, "I have received supreme intelligence from my glorious Republic."

Lempriere rejoiced. He did not literally appreciate how the supremacy arose, since, with genuine British instinct, he disbelieved that anything supreme existed beyond the pale of the United Kingdom. He was, however, delighted, with a dash of reserve, to find he had been fogged by a national misconceit.

"Yes, the intelligence I have received enchants my soul."

"Let me hear it," said Lempriere, forcing a fitting smile. "I yearn to profess my joy of the fortune favouring your destiny."

"My destiny!" sighed Corelli, a serious expression subduing his vivacity. "Well, call it destiny, if you will. But Destiny is cruel. She fosters prospects only to disenchant; promotes

designs merely to destroy. We are her sport, her victim, and applause is her brightest weapon. Life is one long craving for applause. It is our essence—yes; and while it swells and the wings of triumph spread, Destiny descends and vanquishes our hopes. I falter, Lempriere, yes, I falter when I——. But I moralise, dear friend, do I not?" asked Corelli, whose fervour and philosophy died away in an instant.

Lempriere had no difficulty in persuading the Italian to divert his discourse from abstract theories and turn its full tide upon himself. This change was so easy, simple, and natural, that Corelli embraced it with avidity.

"I have informed you of my political ambition. Well, it is about to be consummated. My Concession is considered a grand stroke of luck for my glorious Republic. It floated so finely on the English market that my notoriety in my adopted country has mounted by leaps and bounds—as one of your orators declared of your beneficent income tax."

Lempriere, while omitting to correct, thought the famous phrase had been nimbly applied.

"I have been offered," continued the Italian, clasping his hands, "a prized portfolio in the ministry of my Republic."

"I congratulate you," cried Lempriere, casting off British reserve. "And when must you accept the honour?"

"I accepted it by cable this morning," answered Corelli, his swarthy features aglow with elation.

"What! — accepted it off-hand? You have raised no scruples?—made no obstinate reservations? Oh, Corelli, you are too honest for a politician!"

"In my glorious Republic politicians are patriots. In this old country they are all professionals."

"Quite true," said Lempriere, knocking the ash from his cigar. "We are a practical people. Government means keeping the public purse; spending the public money; maintaining public order; and defending the public stomach."

"Defending the public stomach!" cried Corelli in astonishment.

"Yes—a very important defence. We have nothing to gain by conquest, but many things to preserve, the chief being the preservation of country. This must be accomplished by a continuous sufficiency of food. In other words, defending our shores means defending the public stomach."

"Quite right!" theatrically exclaimed Corelli. "Long live the public stomach!"

"Somebody is making odd use of his stomach over there," remarked Lempriere.

Both gentlemen directed their gaze to the form of a man prone on the earth in a dip or hollow of the moor. He was so intent on surveying the mansion through a telescope that he had not been warned of their approach.

"Another confounded detective," muttered the ex-banker.

"Ask yer parding," said the owner of the telescope. "I'm jest takin' a bud's-eye sight uv thet there bloomin' old brickstack."

"A photographer, I presume?" ironically inquired Corelli.

"No—a connoueyezer."

"A what, my dear friend?"

"A chap as can't make 'ead or tail uv anythin' 'e sees."

A shocking squint distorted the eyes of the powerful man who now rose to his feet.

"Why are you studying my property?" asked Lampriere.

"Coz a cat may look at a king."

"The conduct of a cat is often suspicious."

"Suspect as much as yer please, guvnor. It won't kill me."

Before Lempriere could reply, the rough fellow, who was attired in a style denoting denizenship of Whitechapel, pocketed his telescope and slouched off.

"There's a cut-throat for you—perhaps a burglar," remarked Corelli. "Are you well defended, dear friend?"

"I have fire-arms," answered Lempriere, awaking out of an uncomfortable reverie.

The gentlemen returned to the mansion, and, ascending to the library, plunged into arm-chairs.

"When do you leave England?"

"I shall embark to-morrow week," replied the Italian, lighting a cigar.

"So soon? Well, the business of the

Concession is in excellent order. Old Lambert will continue to watch your interests."

"That man," said Corelli, forgetting the lawyer's polished baldness, "has a wonderfully clear head."

"Lambert senior is as clever a lawyer as any in Lincoln's Inn."

"Ah, Lincoln's Inn," said the foreigner, emitting an emphatic whiff to render the remark conspicuous. "Your lawyers are as gregarious as crows, and their costume is nearly as dark."

The gentlemen were agreeably startled by the sound of the luncheon gong. Recovering presence of mind, they rose to enjoy the palatable meal prim Mrs. Jenkins had punctiliously prepared to gratify the foreigner. Corelli was urbane to the elderly housekeeper; full of sparkling badinage to Lempriere; and assiduous in his attention to the decanters. Lempriere gave noble example of an Englishman's mid-day appetite; of his love of jovial joking; of his ability to keep pace with any European anti-temperance advocate. The luncheon over, the gentlemen returned to the library and restored themselves to the luxury of arm-chairs and cigars.

Of course Corelli was full of his future.

"In my glorious Republic politics are familiarly conversed. Every man is a politician."

"Not so here," returned Lempriere. "The interest of the crowd in politics is a simmering conceit. Follow my leader is the cue of our country, and few appreciate the stormy questions

that ruffle the stream of political life."

"But your careful countrymen read their newspapers."

"Truly—for murders and divorces."

"I wish to report, sir," said Jenkins, speaking from the verandah, "that a rough man has been loafing on the moor ever so long. I've been watching him through a telescope."

"Well done, Mr. Jenkins," laughed Corelli. "An eye for an eye, eh? Your friend on the moor is equally qualified."

"I know he is, sir; and it strikes me he is qualifying for a visit here. I'll have another look at him. He's still about," said Jenkins, disappearing to re-adjust his glass.

"Shall you visit Italy?" asked Lempriere.

The foreigner started, and the hand holding the cigar trembled. But his usual composure soon re-appeared.

"No; I shall not visit Italy. My native land is dear to my heart, but there are circumstances I never mention—memories I name to my God, which I shall never efface, perhaps never atone. Italy, dear Italy! land of ineffable charm—land I may love, pray for, but never revisit."

The dinner that night was a brilliant success. Mrs. Jenkins exceeded herself, and outweighed Lempriere's improvised calculations. Corelli marvelled at her culinary expertness. Had she been studying modern cookery? Had some *savant* in the toothsome art drawn aside the magic veil and revealed an assortment of coveted

dainties ? Neither *savant* nor study was responsible for the wisdom which marshalled the meal that night. It was prim Mrs. Jenkins in the superlative apparel of original invention !

" This wine is superb," said Corelli, exalting his glass.

" Aye," remarked Lempriere, " poets and painters have owed language and colour to the prompting of Bacchus."

" He is a delightful fellow to meet after a hard day's work."

" Not another deity is at once so worshipped and reviled."

" The revilers are insipid grumblers. The man of imagination loves the subtle excitement which is the essence of elegant wine."

" Here, hear ! " exclaimed Lempriere, in parliamentary style. " By the way, Corelli, you promised to sing a song you have written and set to music."

Corelli was never loth to exhibit his powers as a pianist, but he had never before appeared in the character of composer. Vanity had incited him to subscribe to the weakness, and Lempriere was curious to hear the production.

As the men entered the drawing-room they moved intuitively towards the window. The blinds were undrawn, and the richly constellated heavens were bathing the changeless moor with soft celestial light. The view was entrancing, and the Italian gazed rapturously, the ardour of his southern nature aroused into ethereal con-

templation. Lempriere, standing stock-still, his legs stretched apart, the tip of his nose at an angle of forty-five, also absorbed the scene. But no ideal rapture suffused his practical mind—the prosaic gist of a blue book on epidemics better pleasing his romanceless fancy. Heaving a faint sigh, Corelli turned from the casement and approached the piano. Running his experienced fingers dreamily over the keys, he slowly commenced this somewhat singular song:—

A land of rare beauty, of treasure sublime,
I pine to revisit once more—
To linger and love in its soft sunny clime,
And memory's vision restore.
Hard fate, unrelenting, denies me the bliss
To gaze where I once drew my breath,
Or imprint on one stone the heartbreaking kiss
Of the exile banished till death.

But why should I grieve? Let us live for to-day;
The unknown to-morrow we'll scout;
The joy of the morning ere noon may decay,
Or sink in the shadows of doubt.
Altho' on the future, to fancy so fair,
I dwell with increasing delight,
She's fickle and false, casting hope in despair,
As the day fades into the night.

Away with sad omens! I vow and acclaim
My heart throbs the burning desire
To mount and slake thirst at the fountain of fame,
The breath of ambition respire.
But, see, a dark phantom is crossing my path,
Obscuring the ravishing sight,
It beckons—it points—wildly seeming in wrath—
Far away in the mystic night.

The voice ceased—ending almost in a wail.

Lempriere was startled. Before him, on the verandah at the unveiled window, stood the form of Gaspar St. John, cloaked and hooded, stern and motionless. His arms were folded, his head bent, his face almost pressed the pane. But his expression—the fierce and concentrated scorn, the pale contracted hatred—thrilled and riveted Lempriere. Rigidly stood the student, his dark dilated eyes fixed and fascinated by the foreigner. Corelli, turning and half rising, paused and shrank before the fire of that withering glance. Recovering, he rose erect, stepped forward, hesitated——

St. John had vanished.

"Are you lost in fatalistic musing?" said Corelli, in his old voice, placing a hand coaxingly on Lempriere's shoulder.

"My dear fellow," said the other, awaking from a trance and evading the Italian's question, "what on earth made you write such a doleful ditty?"

"Ah, I daresay you think me odd, but I never could compose a merry piece."

Half-an-hour afterwards Corelli, in high spirits and accompanied a short way by Lempriere, rode into the lonely star-lit night. The Italian was overflowing with generous emotions. The splendour of the heavens, the potency of a loving cup just imbibed, and the captivation of brilliant expectations breaking into bloom, combined to exercise the idealism which dominated his varying moods. His refined loquacity was diversified by

allusions to his opening career, to his recognition of the worthiness of British character — no insignificant compliment—and to the happy hours he had spent in England. At length the moment for parting arrived. With clasped hands and many a warm shake, the two men reiterated assurances of undying friendship. A last farewell, a wave of his arm, and Corelli cantered out of sight into the lonesome night.

CHAPTER XIII

"Good morning, Basil," said Martella, reining in her horse and extending her hand. "And this is how you spend your leisure at Murkwoop?"

"To-day is not one for visitors," said Lempriere, peevishly saluting his cousin.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the lady, shrugging her shoulders and yielding to a grimace. "What a dismal place!"

Miss Seldon had ridden over from the village of X——, about five miles distant. Bold in everything, she was unattended — astonishing Lempriere out of a brown study by galloping down and suddenly pronouncing his name.

"I know it is not a day for visitors, cousin. But I suppose," said the lady, looking slyly at Lempriere, "one may roam at rifle-range from the mansion, and still not be infringing that stupid legacy?"

Poor Basil Lempriere! Why was everybody sneering at his legacy? Calling it stupid was calling him a fool! Of course it was. Insufferable! Was he not pining for liberty? That he was, and——

"I say, cousin," quietly remarked Martella, "could you manage to introduce me to that sour recluse, Mr. Gaspar St. John?"

"Oh!" impatiently answered Lempriere, "he

has a fit of the blues, and is keeping his room. He was to have breakfasted with me this morning, but I got a little note begging me to excuse him. Corelli was here yesterday, and St. John, who was pacing the verandah, caught sight of him through the window. I suspect the appearance of the Italian has upset him."

"Upset him? How curious!"

"It is simply ridiculous!" assented Lempriere, viciously flicking his glove.

"But why is it? He does not know Corelli, and——"

"Oh, a dislike of—er—Italians runs in the blood of the St. Johns."

"Very extraordinary. I more than ever desire to be introduced. He must be extremely interesting."

"Most interesting, except when you talk about Italians. If you do that you must look out for a terrific battery of refined abuse."

"If I am introduced I must not refer to——"

"On no account mention Italy or her inhabitants."

"I promise. So you had Corelli here, yesterday? How did he like Murkwoop?"

"Hated it at first sight. He is leaving England. I suppose you know?"

"I was not aware. Is he returning to South America?"

Basil informed his cousin of the foreigner's acceptance of office, adding, many sighs punctuating his remarks, that he wished he himself had

the chance of entering the ranks of a Ministry.

"Why not strive to become prominent in Parliament?"

"Impossible in present circumstances."

"I never cease to wonder why you persist in hiding yourself in this hideous corner of the country."

"Well, there is—er—another House, a grander House, an—er—in short, an Upper House."

Miss Seldon was so surprised that she dismounted without assistance.

"Yes, Martella, a House you may enter by means of—er—hard cash."

"You are aiming at a peerage, Basil?"

"My first aim is a hospital—my next—er—is a peerage."

"Is that why you are so patient here?"

"It is; and it was my reason for joining Corelli in promoting his great Concession. Two piles of cash are better than one; and three piles are—er—better than—er—" but here he lisped and lingered, and was half inclined to pause.

Miss Seldon was too much of a woman to allow her curiosity to be baulked by so silly an obstacle as a man's hesitation.

"Three piles! What do you mean? Where will the third pile come from?"

"It is a contingent pile," explained Lempriere to his strong minded relative. "If anything should happen to Corelli—I mean should he die—I should receive the sum of money he stands to make."

"But he is not likely to die. It is more probable he will become President of his glorious Republic."

"In that case there would be no Lady President to lead society, unless——"

"Unless I could persuade him to marry me," said the downright Martella. "Well, I don't care much for the man, but I confess the position of Lady President——"

"Would be attractive, and—er—would really be novel."

"Decidedly. An Italian and an Englishwoman ruling the political and social policy of an important Republic. It certainly flavours——"

"Of the romantic."

"Precisely. I came over to tell you, cousin, I shall be off to Vienna on Saturday."

"Will you be absent long?"

"A fortnight. Have you managed to 'pair' with Montague, or do you want me to——"

"Oh, bother the House of Commons!" cried the member for Breeze, looking bombs and dynamite and all manner of explosive purposes.

CHAPTER XIV

It was a bright morning and Lempriere rose refreshed. Pulling aside the blind he wondered why the moor was so abominably flat. He next argued that a little upheaval, arranged by an earthquake, would nicely relieve the landscape and shake Murkwoop into romantic ruins. He would rather not be personally embroiled in the business, but he believed a revision of outline—the moor a mountain and the mansion a wreck—would reduce the legacy into immediate possession.

"Bless my soul," thought Lempriere, buttoning his collar and breaking his thumbnail. "Bless my—damn the stud!" cried he, forgetting the purity of speech acquired in Parliament. "Bless my—well—what odd ideas enter one's head! Suppose," mused he, fondly fingering a lucifer, "Murkwoop were burnt down to-morrow? Suppose such a thing! Why, I should grab the legacy the very next day. Old Frogmore only condemned me to live in his Murkwoop. Well, now, if his Murkwoop were burned down to-morrow I should be free; for all the King's horses and all the King's men could never erect his Murkwoop again."

Gaspar St. John was to breakfast with Lempriere. The student's startling appearance on the verandah while Corelli was singing was almost effaced from the ex-banker's memory. Once or twice he had thought of it, but each time he had considered St. John's conduct eccentric and unsociable.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the ex-banker, after one of these flights of retrospection, "why the deuce didn't St. John tap at the window and come in? What is the good of hating Italians *en masse*? Victor Corelli has done him no harm. Yet he abhors him because he's an Italian. I never knew such nonsense in my life!" And Lempriere was so overcome with disgust that he ceased to linger for St. John (who was late), and, seating himself at the table, commenced a vigorous attack on a capital breakfast.

At last St. John entered. He was pale—wearing the air of a man afflicted with aching thought. His manner was abstracted, his conversation desultory. Usually, he was prepared to meet any dialectical opportunity; but now he deliberately shunned every subject threatening to involve him in the risk of controversy.

"I have often marvelled," said Lempriere, "why old Frogmore left me that confounded legacy."

"Are you not delighted?" asked St. John, a sarcastic smile trembling on his lips.

"I shall die all the richer. Sometimes I fancy old Frogmore had a motive."

"He always complained that his relatives left him severely alone," returned St. John. "I suspect there was some misunderstanding, for his wealth was sufficient to have attracted shoals of claimants to kindred. This neglect of his welfare, or his wealth, nettled him, and I believe he determined that no relative should benefit by a penny until he had bent his back to the command of a testamentary decree."

"You think," said the ex-banker, shifting uneasily, "that he meant to give all concerned a taste of the testamentary birch?"

"Well—yes; and for every cut a gilded balm. Any wound or pain can be cured by cash. All admit the curative quality of that treasured emollient. Dishonour can erase its stains and vice vindicate its blemishes by blinding man's memory with a golden band. Money may not purchase escape from hangman or dungeon, but it can effectually secure any sort of social immunity."

St. John rose and strode to the verandah. Looking over the moor, he intently watched an object moving in the distance.

"Whom have we here?" he asked, at length.

Lempriere, with an effort, dragged himself from the breakfast table, and, shading his eyes, perceived a man in a cart approaching at a violent pace. Going to the mantelpiece, the cautious ex-banker took a field-glass and covered the traveller, thus ascertaining that the occupant of the cart was burly Mr. Butcher, the steady-going landlord of "The Bell."

Butcher's face on ordinary days wore a fancy colour composed of blended scarlet and blue, and when he laughed laboriously this would deepen to a purple in an agony; but on entering the room, on this occasion, he presented a graphic group of diversified hues, which greatly astonished the gentlemen. The keenness of the morning had stamped his cheeks with broad spots of blue and white, while scattered over the rest of his visage were big blots of the regular blend, everywhere fringed with gooseberry green. It was not a pleasant spectacle, and Lempriere secretly resented his intrusion, which, under the supervision of Mr. Jenkins, had not been promoted with any preliminary ceremony.

"Oh, gentlemen," said the innkeeper, rolling his words as he rolled his beer-barrels, "I am the bearer of evil tidings."

The gentlemen stared at him inquiringly.

"Mr. Victor Corelli," said Butcher, whose ponderous solemnity boded a mighty discharge of unpalatable news, "did not return to my inn the night before last according to promise. I did not trouble, sirs, or sit up very late, sirs, as I thought he was gadding after that wicked young hussy, Mary Maguire. Howsoever, sirs, this morning—for, as I have said, sirs, he did not return to me last night either, which was strange, as I thought—well, this morning—ah, sirs! the consequences of our sins overtake us, sirs, they do, and no mistake—this morning, sirs, I had news about him which has frightened me out of my very wits."

The innkeeper, who had risen from his seat, now walked across the room quaking in every limb. Arriving at the central window, he raised and pointed his hand over the moor, exclaiming, laconically :

" He is over there ! "

" Over there ? " cried Lempriere, half-puzzled, half-alarmed, at the innkeeper's demeanour.

" Over there !" pointed Butcher, determined not to be misunderstood.

" My good fellow, explain yourself," urged Lempriere, showing petulance.

" Mr. Victor Corelli," retorted Butcher, in his climax, " is lying over there—over there, dead !—aye, dead ! "

" Dead ! " shouted the ex-banker, aghast.

" Dead ! A labouring man, going to a new job, came to the place where the body lies, about two miles from the boundary of the moor. He turned, and ran back all the way to the village. I am here to say, also, sirs, that Mr. Corelli has been brutally murdered ! "

" Murdered ? " gasped Lempriere, pale with agitation.

" Murdered and robbed, and his body is lying —over there ! "

There was a frenzied hurrying, and frantic, horrifying thoughts coursed through Lempriere's brain. He was quickly in the saddle, galloping madly over the moor. Shrinking with dread, he drew rein at the fatal spot. There was no mistake. Corelli's corpse lay stark and cold—

life, hope, ambition cast down and annihilated by the dastardly blow of a godless assassin. There were no signs of a struggle. He had been stunned and—shot! A bruise on the temple and a wound behind the ear told the bitter tale of his terrible end.

CHAPTER XV

LEMPRIERE was intensely shocked—nay, in a maze of petrifying bewilderment. For hours after the tragic discovery he was rambling through that manly confusion of thought called grief, and unpacking every sample of moderate sorrow for Corelli's untimely departure. Later, he entered the mansion of meditation, and occupied a gloomy apartment in that pensive abode. Encircled by the fitful shadows of his sacred retreat, his ideas became clouded with mild contrition. He gently blamed himself—old Frogmore in particular—as indirectly instrumental to the ghastly catastrophe. "If," soliloquised he, "Frogmore had not left me the legacy, Corelli would never have come to Murkwoop. Poor fellow!" sighed Lempriere, casting up his eyes and transmitting the incense of his sentiment to comfort Corelli's complaining spirit. "I thought I should live to hail him President of his glorious Republic. Ah! he is roaming a purer Republic now. But," pursued the pondering ex-banker, "ministries up there are made of angels, and there is no competition for the post of President."

The corpse was carried by awed labourers to the village of B——, and on the fifth day from the mysterions crime—for not a trace of the

murderer existed — the Coroner convened his Court to adjudge the cause of death.

The anxious villagers were early astir. Dotted about the green, spreading pleasantly in front of "The Bell," were groups of men and women in earnest conversation. The exclusive topic of discussion was the motive which had instigated the crime. Robbery had followed the murder; but apparently the Italian had been first stunned and then shot. Why shot while insensible? Had the robber slaughtered his victim to arrest the risk of pursuit?—or was the theft to mask a deed of unrelenting vengeance?

The cold inanimate clay of the once versatile foreigner lay within a chamber of "The Bell." That sometime frolicsome hostelry was the centre of hushed remark and subdued comment, and was arrayed in the symbols of mourning. Blinds were drawn; shutters were up; the tap and parlour were sombre solitudes. It is anomalous that inquiries into circumstances of the violent extinction of human life should be associated with scenes of sublunary conviviality. But custom ordains it, and claims the consonant excuse of convenience.

Somewhat removed from the inn, another habitation was attracting observation—the cottage occupied by Mary Maguire and her mother. Rumour averred the pretty dressmaker poignantly deplored the death of the generous foreigner. Her relations with him had not been modelled on propriety; but all the world respects sorrow when

it is sincere. Villagers pitied the lonely grieving heart bleeding beneath the bodice of her own design and make. In the course of the gossip it was stated that an explosion of wrath, culminating in alienation, had occurred between Mary and Tom Butcher. A maladroit jest of the booser was the cause; and Tom, full of rage and beer, had quitted the village for London. Old Butcher, eager to be rid of his disreputable offspring, expedited his departure; and Tom, having never seen our wonderful Metropolis, and believing beer was cheap and plentiful, packed himself off to be supported by his ponderous parent at the rate of one pound a week, paid in advance.

The jury, having viewed the body, assembled in the club-room of the inn. Formal evidence was tendered that Victor Corelli, an Italian, was a naturalised citizen of the South American Republic. Lempriere was called, and related the circumstances of the visit to Murkwoop. He was affected in a creditable manner, and gave part of his evidence under the usual emotion. He believed robbery was the motive, as, on the night of his death, Corelli was wearing valuable articles of jewellery, all of which, with important documents and a roll of bank notes, were missing when the body was found. Lempriere was about to retire and make place for Mr. Butcher, who was burning to distinguish himself, having discovered the whereabouts of Corelli's horse which, apparently, had bolted miles into the country, nor stopped until it had taken

refuge in the stable yard of a small farmer, who, puzzled by his new possession, gladly restored the animal to the pompous proprietor of "The Bell." The ex-banker's withdrawal, however, was delayed by the rising of a fair young gentleman, wearing spectacles, who desired to cross-examine.

"Who are you?" inquired the Coroner.

"I am a member of—the—the—bar."

"I understand that," briskly answered the Coroner. "But who are you?"

"A member—of—of——"

"Yes, yes—I know," said the Coroner, testily. "I want to know for whom you appear?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the bashful barrister, a new light gleaming through his glasses. "I represent the South American Republic."

"What is your name, sir?" asked the Coroner.

"Makefame," answered the barrister, exhibiting a tendency to stammer.

"Very well, Mr. Makefame, you may proceed," said the Coroner, glancing quickly at the jury.

This valuable permission being obtained, the counsel learned in the law seemed at a loss to employ it, polishing his glasses industriously, as though they were to aid him to invent his questions.

"Now, Mr. Makefame, we are waiting," cried the Coroner, his eyebrows well up, and a germ of badinage in his voice.

"Er—er—er—" began the barrister, raising a hand impressively.

Lempriere, seeing nothing to answer, looked abstractedly before him.

"You are—er—Basil Lempriere, the Member for Breeze?" asked Makefame, holding a sheet of paper covered with small writing.

Lempriere admitted he bore and cherished the name he was born to; also that he proudly represented a borough ventilating democratic principles under the ægis of a Tory caucus.

Makefame, resuming his spectacles, consulted his sheet of paper, but finding his notes of one pattern, none fitting the inquiry, he resolved to try extemporaneous cross-examination.

"You and—er—er—the late Mr. Corelli were great friends?"

Basil answered in the affirmative, again betraying that eloquent emotion permitted to public men.

"You are—er—a public company promoter?"

Mr. Lempriere indignantly denied the suggestion, conveying rebuke in his voice.

"But—er—you promoted Mr. Corelli's Concession?"

"I helped to do so, being member of a syndicate formed to promote it," answered the ex-banker, blessing the syndicate in his heart.

"Well—er—yes—er—I see."

Lempriere breathed more freely, still blessing his personal isolation by the happy medium of the syndicate.

"I think," stammered Mr. Makefame, imagining he was gifted in the thought department, "that

you will be—er—a large gainer by—er—the death of this Italian ? "

" What on earth," interrupted the Coroner, " has that to do with this inquiry ? "

" I am instructed," explained Makefame, who, under that blissful ban, never dreamed of discretion, " that Mr. Lempriere will pocket many, many thousands of pounds because Corelli is dead."

" Where is the remarkableness of that ? " asked the Coroner, who, it was clear, would not be trifled with.

" Surely the topic is—er—rel-e-vant ? " piteously spluttered the counsel.

" It is relevant if you are ready with the theory that the witness killed Corelli. Now, Mr. Makefame, tell us what you are driving at."

Makefame felt he was being driven. Presently he fancied he was at bay. Beside him sat a determined-looking man—the instructing solicitor. This person now rose and poured a volley of remarks into Makefame's left ear. The learned counsel, nodding dubiously, and beseechingly eyeing the Coroner, again prayed for patience from the presiding functionary.

" I can only suggest—a—a—theory—by—by—cross-examination."

" I decline," said the blunt Coroner, " to sanction a cross-examination which is recklessly intended to fling odious suspicion on an uncorrupted witness. I should be permitting a monstrous injustice. Mr. Lampriere has admitted

he was last in the company of the late Corelli; and on that admission you may, if you please, frame the theory that he is the murderer. But, until I am so advised, I refuse to allow this cross-examination."

Mr. Makefame, after whispering with the instructing solicitor, ruefully resumed his seat.

The next witness was Job Jenkins. His shrewd passive face was undisturbed by the novelty of his surroundings; and his evidence, that he got the horses ready and watched the riders disappear, was delivered with unaffected dryness.

The spectacled counsel again rose to cross-examine. This time the instructing solicitor also rose and kept his whispering lips sealed to Makefame's left ear.

"Er—er—er—" began Makefame, repeating sounds he was receiving from the solicitor. "Is —is there a clock in the hall of—of—Murkwoop?"

Job said there was, and it had a loud tick.

"I don't think the ticking bears upon the case," cried Mr. Makefame, brightening.

"Not at all," added the Coroner, twirling his quill and looking intently into a corner of the ceiling.

"Are you a judge of horses?" demanded Makefame, with a knowing look.

"Pretty fair, sir."

"Was the horse ridden by Mr. Lempriere on the night of the murder in good condition?"

"Capital condition," answered Job, eyeing his interrogator curiously.

"Had it been out before on that day?"

"No, sir."

"Now," said Makefame, inclining his ear for a fresh volley of instructions, "when Mr. Lempriere and Victor Corelli left Murkwoop it was ten minutes past ten by the clock in the hall?"

"Oh, was it?" coolly remarked Job.

"Mr. Lempriere has said so. Don't you confirm him?"

"I do not," emphatically replied Job.

"You do not!" cried Makefame, growing buoyant. "Why not?"

"Because I got the horses ready in the stable, and not in the hall; and the clock was in the hall, and not in the stable," sourly answered Jenkins.

"Oh—I—I—yes—see," stammered Makefame, bidding farewell to his confidence. "You, then, were not in the hall?"

"That's how it was, sir."

"Where did you happen to be," continued Makefame, reviving under a new idea, "when Mr. Lempriere returned to Murkwoop?"

"I was in the hall."

"You were in the hall?" repeated Makefame, ducking his head and unfolding a smile.

"I was."

"Then you can tell us what time it was when he got back?"

"Oh," said Job, thoughtfully rubbing his chin, "I should say it was about half-past eleven."

"So, Mr. Jenkins," exclaimed the exhilarated

Makefame, "on your own showing, it took Mr. Lempriere one hour and twenty minutes to ride five miles on a horse in good condition?"

"Well?" laconically queried Jenkins.

"Do you consider, being a judge of horses, that one hour and twenty minutes was a reasonable time for riding such a distance on such a horse?"

"It depends upon the pace," was the imperturbable reply.

"Oh—er—yes—I see—it—er—of course—depends upon—er—the—er—pace," gurgled Makefame, stammering until he broke down in that singular style of speech. Finding he was barren of further resource, he submitted himself to the instructing solicitor, and was safely steered to his seat.

During this sparkling display, the audience stared first at the nervous barrister and then at the astounded ex-banker. But staring would fail to impart any idea of Lempriere's method of eyeing the forensic tyro. "What the devil does it all mean?" he muttered to himself. Unable to answer this inimitable query, he applied himself, in the same impressive way, to Lambert junior, who was present at the inquest to watch the interests of his interlocutor.

"This Makefame is a young man—a very young man," explained Lambert.

"Oh! is that all it means?"

"Really, yes; a very young man who must flutter his wings."

"Then he has been playing to the gallery at my expense?"

"Precisely. They all do it while they are young."

"Well, it would give me the greatest pleasure to kick——"

This finely-turned phrase died on Lempriere's lips. A shuffling of feet and a turning of faces announced the Coroner was summing up the case to the jury. The speaker ironically sympathised with Makefame's zeal to cultivate a reputation for smartness. He explained that innuendoes were common in every court, and grew on the lips of greenish members of the bar like cherries on a tree.

"No doubt, gentlemen of the jury," said the Coroner, "the learned counsel acted strictly on his instructions, a practice he will ameliorate as his years ripen and his experience matures. He has hinted, gentlemen, that, because Mr. Lempriere dallied on Murkwoop Moor and sauntered his horse to enjoy his meditation, he is a fit object for infamous insinuations, made after the manner of theatrical asides. For my part, while I denounce Mr. Makefame's style, I feel some indulgence for his conduct. I am satisfied he was not a free agent, but was hampered by that long piece of paper, which has been flourished about in this case, and is called, I presume, a brief." After further remarks on portions of the evidence, the Coroner directed the jury to consider their verdict.

. . . . . .

The jury retired; all village juries retire. In

half-an-hour they returned, and delivered their verdict in these words: "We find Victor Corelli met his death by an unknown hand; that the hand in question is still at large ready for other crimes; and that it is the duty of the police to seize such hand, without delay, as it belongs to a murderer whose whereabouts are unknown."

CHAPTER XVI

"Is it not a horrid insinuation?" demanded Josephine.

"Abominable!" assented Martella.

"To think of his cross-examining papa in that dreadful way!"

"Who is this wretched busybody, Makefame? Some miserable weakling, I'll be bound, who meekly pockets fees and follows the behest of any peddling attorney. I'll expose him at every dinner-table I sit down to. No respectable solicitor shall brief him if I can prevent it."

"It is downright wickedness," declared Josephine.

"Ah, my love, lawyers can be perfect devils," said Martella, rocking herself indignantly in her favourite chair.

"If Mr. Makefame had even imagined papa guilty——"

"Imagined!" echoed Martella, fanning herself with *The Times*. "What imagination could justify attaching the taint of a diabolical innuendo to an ex-banker, a county magistrate, an honourable member of Parliament? The House of Commons may shelter plenty of boobies, but no Commoner in his senses would think of committing a higher form of offence than political tergiversa-

tion." Saying which, Miss Seldon rose, and, muttering something inaudible about the torture of neuralgia, lighted a cigarette.

"And now there is this shocking leading article!" plaintively cried Josephine, turning over the pages of a provincial newspaper.

"*The Breeze Mercury*," said the worldly Martella, "is the Opposition organ in your papa's constituency, and is bitterly opposed to his political views. It cannot, therefore, be expected to breathe fairness or veracity when speaking of his concerns."

"Oh, I wish you had been here," returned Josephine, whose frame of mind fostered the fancy that her clever relative could have averted the misfortune.

Martella would would have been present at the inquest, but she was in Vienna, and had slighted English newspapers. She had reached London the previous night, having travelled post haste to be present at the nuptials of a dear friend. The dear friend was the fiancée of a fine fellow who had received an appointment in India, and the dear friend and fine fellow were to be married in haste, and quit country and kindred for many waiting years. At the wedding Martella met her niece, Josephine, who poured into Miss Seldon's ears a tearful account of the cruel treatment received by her papa at the inquest. Amazed and disgusted, Martella tore herself from the farewell embrace of the blushing bride, and hurried her niece to her home and boudoir.

In general, there is nothing remarkable about a Coroner's inquest; and even murders, unless rounded off by romance, are common enough to be stigmatised humdrum. But this inquest on the hapless Italian had lugubriously affected the equanimity of Miss Lempriere, owing to the abusive tone adopted by different provincial journals. Makefame had stutteringly theorised that the peaceable ex-banker had possibly, in a fit of absence, knocked poor Corelli on the head. The downright Coroner had silenced the learned counsel, and certain newspapers were denouncing his highhandedness. Amongst the editorial clamours which raged and roared was one appearing in the *Breeze Mercury*.

EXTRACT FROM "THE BREEZE MERCURY."

It is impossible to suggest that the Coroner's inquiry was decently conducted. The Coroner and Mr. Lempriere manifested suspicious eagerness to suppress material facts. Imagining himself a master of the acumen adorning Her Majesty's judges, this inflated official bellicosely closed Mr. Makefame's lips. Apart from the courtesy due to the representative of a foreign nation, his truculent demeanour was most discreditable. Had Mr. Lempriere been poor or insignificant, what a difference would have denoted this functionary's bearing! But Mr. Lempriere is designated a gentleman, and is, with greater certainty, a member of Parliament; and so he received such christianised regard, that the affair savoured rather of service in a conventicle than of a court of inquest in a country tavern.

Now, of what do we pointedly complain? We complain that Mr. Lempriere declined to disclose a disgraceful company-promoting contract made between himself and Victor Corelli. We complain that, to avoid confession of

this essential article of evidence, he shielded himself behind a ruling of the Coroner which shamefully outraged justice and common sense. We complain that, while treading the vilest by-ways of joint stock company intrigue, he steered pusillanimously through a brewing storm of cross-examination. We complain that, if his conscience is clear, which we reject, if his linen is clean, which we deny, he was scared by a sound—Mr. Makefame's voice—not louder than a penny whistle. We complain that he has not resigned his Parliamentary position and joined the ranks of a third rate vestry!

When Lord Macaulay threatened to dust a poet's jacket, he meant, literally, to draw a certain amount of attention to his victim and a particular amount of attention to himself. So with the *Breeze Mercury*. Honest belief was no ingredient in the dose of editorial vituperation administered to the backsliding Lempriere. They poured odium in order to vaunt the superior virtues of the party whose politics they were pledged to support. In place of the *Mercury* being depressed by indignation, it had risen with the warmth of exultation. If we can curse our friends on account of their benevolence, we can bless our foes because of their iniquities!

"Josephine," cried Martella, a sudden energy exercising her limbs and faculties, "we will go and see my cousin, Gerald Seldon. I don't think you know him. He is a cousin a few times removed, but he is every way worthy of the name of Seldon."

"Do you think he will be able to help us?"

"He is a barrister, my love. What more need I say?"

"Only I was thinking——"

"Leave that to Gerald. He must think for us. Whatever we do, let us do it under his direction. The advice of a lawyer is an excuse to the understanding and a saving clause to the conscience."

CHAPTER XVII

Pump Court, Temple, is flag-paved and quadrangular, and is within touch of that ornate edifice, the Temple Church. On three sides are lofty houses belonging to a period when jerry builders were unborn. These have no outer doors; the windows are undecorative, but artistically begrimed; and the floors are reached by creaking stairs and dingy landings. Every tenement sports a black door bearing names in brilliant white. Why black and white should be so intimately connected baffles critical study. If anything the black speaks more plainly than the white, the latter merely suggesting, "What's in a name?"

Pump Court contains a pump; but the origin of that passive monster has little to do with this fitful tale. Nevertheless, a pump, being profound, appeals to philosophic imaginations; and its monotonous melody, although discordant, reminds of restless resource and tireless activity. But the Temple pump is disused, decrepid, and despised, and the evil which once flowed from its iron throat has ceased to appease or poison mankind.

Pump Court has immemorially attracted two divergent classes of human creatures—lawyers and laundresses. These orderly and sanitating members of society, though widely divided in

habits, pleasures, and channels of thought, have active concurrent sympathies. Whilst the laundress cherishes cleanliness, she lives by virtue of dirt. Whilst the lawyer purifies subtleties, he delights in rhetorical dust. On a first floor, in Pump Court, Gerald Seldon pursued a lucrative practice—so lucrative, indeed, that vacant minds in the vicinity were constantly tenanted by silly envy and furtive dislike.

Pacing the principal room of Mr. Seldon's chambers was a compact man of five-and-forty. His head was bent in forensic thought, his hands forensically folded behind. This attitude was favoured by gentlemen of the long robe. Its usefulness in Court was indisputable, enabling the speaker to gracefully project a distinguished part of his physical frame and briskly enforce his argument from the hips. The gentleman pacing the room was not handsome, neither was he ill-looking. Imagine a good forehead, firm mouth, strong chin, and deep-set eyes, and—the nose understood—you have an excellent snatch-portrait of Gerald Seldon. As with many counsel, he wore no ornamental hair on the face; and averred that every barrister, briefless or busy, should commit equitable waste on his upper lip.

Gerald Seldon was a lucky man. Not that all lawyers are lucky. Far from it. The lawyer without capital or clients is cruelly unlucky; and he of crude or inconspicuous ability deserves unstinted commiseration. The lawyer whose knowledge of bankruptcy is culled in conducting

himself "through the Court," is a queer tale with a moral attached; while the one who believes in himself, and awakens to disenchantment, is a touching instance of explicable failure. But Seldon had never been victimised by adversity. His head boasted the proper stuff; his practice comprised capital clients. His earnings were trebling; his reputation bounding. Take him all round, he was a lucky man!

"'Buzz v. Buzz' is on, sir," cried a shrill voice, belonging to a boy who vanished with incredible swiftness.

Twisting his body into a faded gown, and his head into a dingy wig, Seldon, seizing a bundle of papers, shot down stairs three steps to the jump. Dashing into Nisi Prius, he was in a litigious theatre decked with wigs and war paint. Posing on the stage was our national arbiter, the Law, discerned through a dim light and deleterious atmosphere. If unenlivened by gilded accessories, his throne was illumined by forensic philosophy. Efforts to square the circle were brilliantly manœuvred, merging magnitude into nothing was featly undertaken. Rancour and error roamed his realm, revolving sophistry and whirling rhetoric encompassing their pretensions. But the judicial mind—equal to circumstances, impartial to fact, even in thought—is straight to the quibbler and corners the trickster. This Court, however, was not rehearsing dialectical hair-splitting. It was waging a full-dress rough-and-tumble. The essentials to forensic sparring were

present in full force. Packed like sardines was the docile jury ; and leaning jauntily over the rail of the witness-box was a saucy perjurer, with a twist of triumph ornamenting his visage. Attired in shining silk, a foot on the floor, another on his seat, a paper in one hand, his pince-nez in the other, was a smart Q.C. engaged in removing the twist of triumph from the testifier to nothing but the truth. From his manner of extending his pince-nez, it was imaginable the learned " Silk " was proffering the loan thereof in order that the perky witness might better see his way to disfavour himself and discredit his cause. Sitting above the rest, at a dignified elevation, was the reposeful figure of the grave-looking Judge. Calmly resting an elbow on his desk, and couching a judicial cheek in his upraised palm, he allowed the listless fingers of his idle hand to clasp a passive pen. Alert and persuasive, his twinkling eye cautioned the witness, and a winning smile instructed the jury. Standing below was a marvelling usher, his gaze riveted on the cross-examining Q.C., and the thumbs of his locked hands twirling slowly to the tenor of his thoughts. Other actors filled the scene, including the gaping audience, the satisfied and dissatisfied solicitors, and that wide-awake official familiarly called " Associate."

A hush began to curb the humour of the comedy, and " Buzz v. Buzz " showed signs of breaking down. The rupture of defeat was rapidly widening, and uneasiness was pervading

the parties in the "Well." The Judge was the first to detect it; next the shining "Silk" looked knowing; and lastly the nonchalant witness grew glum. Then the jury waxed restless; the usher boldly shouted "Silence!" and Seldon stooped and whispered "Compromise!" That healing word settled the case. Wigs were huddled and wagged and shaken, and sprays of white powder rose and clouded the question. A piece of blue paper was signed and flourished, and was handed by usher to Judge. His Lordship read, nodding pleasantly to the jury. The gentlemen twelve uprose, nodding pleasantly to the Judge. A general unseating ensued, and a squeezing *en masse* to the exit. In a very few minutes the Court was cleared, and "Buzz v. Buzz" was heard no more.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Can I have some conversation with you, Gerald?" said a musical voice at Seldon's elbow.

The barrister's eye rested wistfully—he was a bachelor—on the daintily-gloved hand touching the sleeve of the shabby coat his high professional position entitled him to wear.

Martella introduced Josephine.

Seldon had no hat to lift, but he bent the bow of humility reserved for influential ladies.

Lawyer though he was, Seldon stood in awe of the mental energy and superb fortune of the handsome and imperious Martella. Always clever, he had once been a struggling young man. The law received him, but not with open arms. His chance was as threadbare as the coat he was wearing until Martella marshalled a cohort of flourishing solicitors to his small chambers in Fig Tree Court. From that moment his fortunes burned into a spreading flame, and now their beams were irradiating a widening expanse of the vast forensic firmament.

Seldon was delighted to be acquainted with Miss Lempriere. He was charmed to hear they

were in a way related; remembered Lambert junior perfectly; fondly recollected fees paid by junior's firm; had high opinion of their practice; junior was in a sense his friend; met at club, dined, conversed; didn't always talk "shop;" knew junior wanted to marry.

The barrister escorted the ladies across the Strand to Pump Court, Temple. With bent head and brain alert, he absorbed Martella's swift relation of the murder and the inquest.

"Who is this Makefame?" inquired Miss Seldon, as her cousin bowed her into the room where he devised pleadings and opinions, and other professional knick-knacks, with ceaseless celerity.

Had Makefame boasted a scintilla of celebrity, Seldon would have simpered a languid recognition. As it was he arched his brows and shook his head, mutely doubting the existence of such a being. On second thoughts, however, he took down a portly volume, bound in scarlet and black, and labelled "Law List," and dipped into the names and descriptions of the numerical legal strength of the United Kingdom.

"Ah, I see it all now," said the barrister, sorrowfully fingering a particular page. "Makefame was only called to the bar last year. He must be a very, very young man." And Seldon mournfully closed the book.

"His youth," said the strong-willed Martella, "seems to give him license to abuse truth and traduce an honourable gentleman."

"Nay," deprecated Seldon, who once was quite as green, "this very young man could not help himself. He was instructed ——"

"Not by his conscience. But there ——"

Martella did not finish. Seldon, smiling complacently and removing wig and gown, sank into his working chair. Resting his elbows and interlacing his well-kept fingers, the shrewd lawyer waited suavely for the next remark.

"Well," said Martella, whose merit for patience had never been extolled, "it seems cousin Lempriere must submit to these calumnies."

"Not necessarily. He may repudiate them at ——"

"His own expense! Precisely. A splendid privilege!"

"He was cross-examined, and the latitude allowed ——"

"Should be kept within the bounds of decency," cried the incensed Martella.

The calm counsel raised his hands in genteel reproach. He would have said something to tally with his gesture, but the door suddenly opened and disclosed Lambert junior.

A barrister's sanctum must not be stormed; it must be approached peacefully. The Temple formula, although ancient, is still in vogue. The counsel is engaged with a client, but the conference has lasted too long. Legal advice has strayed into idle chat, and a fresh client is craving admission. The junior clerk, grasping the situation, resolves on strategy. Writing stirring words

on a slip of paper, he creeps stealthily to the sanctum. The opening door disturbs the colloquy, and the clerk, displaying the slip, crosses the threshold. Resolutely facing principal and client, his hand, working craftily behind him, shuts the door. This lulls the gossip, and the barrister half turns in his chair. The client—looking first at the clerk, then at the slip, last at his watch—stoops and picks up his hat and papers. There is a movement to depart, a mutual discovery that each has been detaining the other. The junior clerk, solving the situation, steps forward and presents the slip. The counsel scans it, and lisps an apology. The client, rising, bends a graceful acknowledgment. Hands are shaken, doors opened, clients shuffled, the junior clerk retires victorious!

"No excuses, pray," said Seldon, stemming Lambert's stream of polite inanities. "You are here at an opportune moment."

Lambert, his eye on his beloved Josephine, thought the same thing in another key.

"Miss Seldon," began the barrister, "is naturally very indignant with the *Breeze Mercury*, and would like to have the paper prosecuted. Of course," sighed the counsel, looking compassionately at Martella, "she is unacquainted with the niceties of libel, and——"

"Tell me truly, Mr. Lambert, whether the Coroner acted warrantably in stopping Mr. Makefame," demanded the invincible Martella.

The solicitor of thirty paused to polish his hat.

"Speaking for myself," intervened Seldon, "I think the Coroner——"

"Did not stop Makefame too soon," imprudently admitted Lambert.

"Why did you not re-examine Mr. Lempriere?" asked Seldon, toying with his pince-nez.

"It would never have done. Those agreements with Corelli——"

"But," said the barrister, who never omitted, however unpleasantly, to exhibit his worldly wisdom, "Mr. Lempriere might have volunteered an explanation."

"That unhappy Concession has confused everything," rather hotly rejoined Lambert.

"Possibly," mercilessly added the barrister. "But as a matter of policy——"

"It is all very well to talk about policy," answered Lambert, pacing the room impatiently. "We had to face two evils, and the lesser one was holding our tongue."

"Which," said Seldon, a suspicion of sarcasm in his voice, "was the evil you embraced?"

"We were compelled to yield ——"

"To the conditions of an arbitrary situation."

"I confess you have hit the mark."

"You had received a price for the Concession which ——"

"We dared not disclose."

"Because it was extortionate?"

"Because it was bloated beyond—er ——"

"But big prices are common," drily remarked Seldon.

"The price here was a pack of tricks. Corelli had palmed on his Republic a false estimate, stuffed with illicit ——"

"Is—er—Miss Lempriere equal to listening to this?" blandly asked the barrister of the astounded ladies.

"She is brave, Gerald," answered Martella—a compliment timidly acknowledged by Josephine.

"We—er—are only speaking—er—logically—nothing more."

Poor Lambert junior was forced to proceed.

"Corelli's estimate was prepared by him and his confederates—bribed officials of the Republic. The whole affair was steeped in falsehood, and ——"

"Do you mean to say," cried Martella, her eyes flashing and nostrils distended, "that my cousin Basil was aware ——"

"Do not misunderstand him," interposed Seldon, wishing he had been more reticent.

"I mean," said Lambert, carried away by the ingenuousness of thirty, "that Lempriere knew, as a man of business, the Concession necessarily contained undercurrents of profits. No man in his senses expects immaculate honesty in commercial concerns. Purity, in its essence, is unknown in the financial world. Beneath every undertaking lurk seams of lucre to satisfy the demands of undisclosed claimants. Were it otherwise the scheme would fail and fall flat, as often does the finest invention of unfinanced genius."

"Then why need we be scared?" demanded the undaunted Martella."

"A traitor is in London—a confederate has turned informer."

"Is he preparing an exposure?" enquired the barrister.

"Yes, Seldon, I believe so; and it might mean repudiation by the Republic."

"But surely the fellow is purchasable?"

"Oh, I dare say he has his price."

"Of course he has," said Seldon, reassured. "Then you have a syndicate—a syndicate of honourable names?"

"Of first-class names. Each was pretty handsomely paid for—a necessary precaution."

"Quite so," assented Seldon, heaving a sigh of relief. "Your syndicate was sufficient for the public?"

"Undeniably."

"And your honourable names would move heaven and earth to avert exposure?"

"Exactly."

"And this traitor is purchasable?" continued Seldon, dangling his pince-nez with polite gusto.

Before the solicitor could answer, the small boy hurried in and delivered a card to the barrister.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Seldon. Then, taking Lambert aside, he said in undertones, "Makefame is here wishing to speak with me; I must see what he wants." And the barrister withdrew; not, however, until he had assumed a carriage of easy unconcern.

The door re-opened and admitted Seldon accompanied by the learned Makefame, who, regarding the company compassionately, bowed his head all round.

As Seldon seated himself a portentous gravity settled on his face. He had grown a deal heavier since his dialogue outside. Leaning back languidly, he discoursed deliberately, not forgetting meantine to fastidiously finger his pince-nez.

"Mr. Makefame," said the successful barrister, bending his head condescendingly, "has called to do me a friendly office."

"Seeing we—er—are members of the bar," stammered Makefame.

"Exactly," concurred Seldon drily. "He tells me that certain officials of the Italian Consulate believe Mr. Lempriere is the murderer of Corelli."

"Thinking they have goo—goo—good cause," stuttered the agonised tyro, already in deadly fear of Martella.

"Good cause!" echoed Lambert junior, whose face was a study.

"Mr. Makefame, you are killing my niece!"

Josephine, supported by Martella, was in a fainting condition.

Makefame was situated behind tolerably big spectacles, but he found them far too small to shield him from the fiery effects of the fierce rays flashing from the eyes of the haughty Martella.

"I am better," whispered the shrinking girl. "Pray go on!"

Seldon, with studied hesitation, explained that the extraordinary agreement between Lempriere and Corelli, and which, by the Italian's death, had added something like thirty thousand pounds to Lempriere's fortune, was the foundation of the suspicion of the officials of the Consulate. They considered the agreement—which Corelli had deposited with them—had inspired the ex-banker with the desire to get Corelli out of the way, and that he had removed him accordingly.

That ill-advised meeting broke up with sorrow and remorse—with anger and tears. The sorrow was shared by all concerned; but Makefame alone suffered the remorse. The anger was entirely the property of Martella—the tears being those that freely flowed from the grieving eyes of Josephine.

CHAPTER XIX

"YES, my dear, bad news, very bad. I'm so sorry."

The speaker was a little lady, in visiting dress, with hooked nose, ferrety eyes, and a voluble tongue. She was lady to a belted knight, Sir Giles Quandary, whose rank sprang from a civic luncheon, and savoured of Leadenhall.

Josephine's face wore a pained and worried expression.

"My husband—he tells me, you know—he's in with the police, you know—a past sheriff, you know. He was honoured with knighthood—didn't want it—awful bother—couldn't refuse."

"But," said Josephine, essaying to stem the wordy torrent, "do the police——"

"Yes, really. The police, my husband says—I'm only reporting him, you know—the police suspect your papa, that is—er—they only suspect him logically, you know; but all the same it's a ghastly bore."

Her ladyship paused, for Josephine paled with indignation.

"I'm dreadfully sorry. I'm only a friend, my dear, that is—er—you see, my dear, I've only—er

—come as a friend—er—to warn you that your papa may possibly be arrested."

"Arrested—for what?"

"I don't know; that's the wonder. My husband says he may be—that is—er—your papa may be logically suspected of—er——"

"But my papa has done nothing at all."

"That's just it, my dear. He was joint promoter with Victor Corelli, and he did nothing at all. That is—er—why he's suspected."

"Of what?"

"Of—er—a crime. Of course, it's all nonsense, you know—a mere garbled concoction. That's a phrase of my husband's."

"Suspected of a crime because he was a promoter?"

"Well, you see, my dear, a promoter is supposed to be awfully unscrupulous, and when a man is that, you know, there's really no limit to the lawlessness of suspicion."

"But papa cannot have been a promoter if there was any disgrace in being one. He would be the very last to become such a thing."

Lady Quandary shrugged her shoulders, and drummed her gloved knuckles on the table.

"My dear, there's a fashionable vindictivenss against promoters, and sometimes it reaches a furor. That, however, is only when the 'bubbles' are too transparent."

"I don't quite understand."

"Neither do I, my dear. It's a phrase of my husband's. He was done—yes, done—by pro-

moters. He was director of a company bringing out non-explosive oil, equalling petroleum without its danger. But there was an explosion—not from the oil, that was innocuous, invisible, indeed, was never found—a perfect hubbub; directors held responsible; my husband losing heaps of money, and—oh—er—he will tell you the tale some day. Then," continued her ladyship, rattling on, "there was 'Tic-douloureux Limited,' with a Right Honourable on the directorate, a keen man, a master of finance, but he had no science. He was a fancy director, an attraction, a catch to the unwary, as the Judge said. Yes, 'Tic-douloureux Limited' came before the Judge," gabbled Lady Quandary, looking everywhere but at Josephine, whose face, poor child, was a picture. "Yes, 'Tic-douloureux' had a painful termination. It was strangled by its capital—a phrase of my husband's, my dear—and expired in a tragedy. The directors were prosecuted. They behaved very well; had done really nothing—positively nothing. They had perfectly clean hands—had had nothing to do, except form quorums, pass resolutions, and that sort of thing. But they were tried—yes, tried, and the Judge, having no sentence to pass, was nasty, extremely nasty, talking about big names and spurious prospectuses, gulling the public, and calling them dupes—the shareholders, I mean—and reproaching my husband—yes, Sir Giles Quandary, though innocent as a babe, a victim himself, with clean hands, and—er—oh—this is a funny world—

a very funny world!" concluded her ladyship, petulantly tapping the floor with her foot.

"But you have not told me yet——"

"Oh, of course—to be sure! How stupid of me. Heard it, you know, that is, my husband did, you know, privately. The police have—er—that tantalising thing, a clue. I mean—er—a revolver, found on Murkwoop Moor, belonging to your papa."

"Belonging to my papa? Never! He would not have a revolver. We wished him to take one, but——"

"Exactly, my dear. That's where it is, and why he's suspected. Victor Corelli took him a present of one, richly inlaid, a lovely thing, a present to your papa. It, the present, has been found—— Are you ill, my dear?"

"No, no! I don't quite undestand."

"Well, it is frightfully annoying. The police have found this very revolver, one chamber discharged—the bullet in Corelli's head—on Murkwoop Moor. There is nothing in it—really nothing. Don't be alarmed. A mere logical suspicion, but monstrously provoking!"

Mr. Lempriere was comfortably breakfasting the morning following the above interview, when he received this letter, written with trembling haste:

My dear Papa,

A terrible visit was paid to me yesterday. Lady Quandary says Victor Corelli meant to make you a present of a revolver, and that just lately this revolver has been

found by the police on Murkwoop Moor, with one chamber discharged, and that the bullet found in poor Signor Corelli's brain must have been fired from the chamber which is empty. I cannot write any more. I am starting in haste for the village of B——. Pray meet me at "The Bell" to-morrow. Mr. Lambert senior is coming with me.

With ever fondest love,

Your affectionate

JOSEPHINE.

CHAPTER XX

Love is fleeting and its pace precarious, because its character is denoted by the intoxicating frivolities sold by that festive young traveller, Mr. God Cupid. There are many sorts of lovers, particularly of those with heroic resolves, infatuated fancies, and sublime trustfulness. And frequently there are wooers who mutually distrust, hastily separate, and appeal unsparingly to special juries.

Lambert junior looked glum, and Josephine Lempriere crestfallen. Had the lovers enjoyed the luxury of a quarrel in order to revel in the rapture of a reconciliation? No, indeed. Something more tragic than a wrangle — usually repented with renewed embraces—was harrowing the surface of their thoughts. The visit of Josephine to Pump Court, and the dazing interview with Lady Quandary, had produced a form of grief fatal to true love. Josephine's affection was unselfishly noble. Had she regarded it as a commodity, as a matter of contract or exchange, as something for sale without heed to price or payment, its claim to continuity could not have been contested. But Josephine's sensibility was too finely fibred to admit such callous calculation into the sanctuary of her soul, and hence "union

of hearts" was sundered and coercion of no avail.

Josephine was convinced she ought not to marry Lambert junior while her father was under a cloud. The appalling gloom of that congregated vapour was rapidly thickening. The financial jugglery connected with the great Concession was occasioning interested murmurs, and her dear papa—he was and ever would be her dear papa—was enmeshed in a quagmire of commercial scandal. It was true he had only shuffled some financial cards—a shuffle, however, that had guided crack trumps into the hands of divers dealers. Such dodges, Josephine was assured, were done daily in the City of London, and what was merely customary in so respectable a place could not possibly imply any harm.

But another rumour was rife—was deepening and intensifying as it leaped from lip to lip. It was —born of and nurtured by malicious motive—that Lempriere was hard up, and was only on that account enduring the self-denying retirement to Murkwoop. Oh, the horror of the thing! Hard up, indeed! Worse than being murderer or accessory to murder!

Was it necessary to be poor to explain submission to the misery of Murkwoop? Josephine could not answer. She was too indignant. What a degrading aspersion. Would many believe it? Was it already abroad? Had society scented it? Was it budding in popular places? Were whisperers at work? Was it entertaining the Commons' Lobby? Had it enriched a news-

paper? Nobody could tell—of nobody would she ask.

To suspect a Lempriere of murder—so loathsome a thing of her genial pàpa—made poor Josephine shudder. To imagine him capable of killing a fellow creature—otherwise than by financial ruin—was the "unkindest cut of all." Until the dreadful doubt was dispelled, and the murderer trapped, tried, and hanged, she would not dream of wedding George Lambert junior.

The affecting difference of opinion—really it was nothing more—dividing Josephine and George implanted a stern resolve in the lawyer's unflinching heart. Some lawyers, rivalling the pluck of the veteran who never believes he is vanquished, struggle from court to court until they yield to fate or facts by coming a cropper in the House of Lords. But the valour of Lambert junior was enlisted in behalf of a love suit, and the courage hallowing his breast smacked of the fervour of romance. He had resolved—brave and noble young man!—to hunt down, seize, and incarcerate the fleeing murderer of the unhappy Corelli. This daring task he would consummate without aid or hindrance from Scotland Yard. It was, indeed, an exalted ambition—hanging a miscreant to win a wife!

CHAPTER XXI

LEMPRIERE had lapsed into the solitariness that stamped the first stage of his confinement, and St. John had retired into quondam exclusiveness. The student was reported to be toiling at literary work, and politely discarded Lempriere's piteous invitations despatched through Jenkins. Lempriere had never invaded the stoic's apartments—circumspection, rather than cowardice, having governed his hesitation. It was on the cards whether such an incautious act might not jeopardise the legacy, and this uncomfortable consideration had deterred him from violating the sanctity of St. John's privacy.

After futile efforts to dissolve the student's icy reserve, Lempriere concluded St. John desired discontinuance of their intimacy. They met occasionally on the moor, but only to quaff the smallest doses of conversational pleasure. The ex-banker prattled and smiled in his usual amicable fashion, the student, a fictitious listener, with knitted brows and folded arms, moving meanwhile slowly and thoughtfully forward. When he condescended to speak he was satirical, his logic ironical, his metaphors sardonic. Why this change? Why torment his companion and torture himself? Was he harassed by a new-

created sorrow, or did he repent and recoil from his recent sociable courtesy? St. John muttered excuses touching absence of mind, and pleaded his studious habits, his attachment to philosophy, his brooding disposition. These obvious evasions, sufficient for the inventor, at last satisfied Lempriere, and as much as one was willing to avoid the other was willing to be avoided.

"It is all due to that confounded legacy!" exclaimed Lempriere, his voice betraying irritation. He was seated in the parlour of "The Bell," and opposite was the dejected form of George Lambert junior. "Depend upon it," continued the prophetic ex-banker, "if old Frogmore had kept that confounded legacy in his confounded estate, you and I would not be breeding dismals by the dozen, and feeling too disgusted to order luncheon." But the pangs of hunger prevailing over moralising, Mr. Lempriere rose and rang up Mrs. Butcher.

"Yes," answered Lempriere, "I have been visited by a police officer—a pleasant fellow. Corelli never presented me with the revolver. He forgot it, I suppose; and the wretch who stunned him must have used it against him."

"Have the police put you under conditions?"

"Under surveillance, I believe," said Lempriere, resignedly puffing a cigar.

"Nothing hinted at—er—arresting you?"

"Not that I know of."

"It would be a very awkward position to be placed in."

"Might be interesting."

"Well, the whole thing is engrossing a good deal of attention in town."

"The murder or the ——"

"Oh, the whole business—especially the affair of the sale of—er——"

"You hesitate, George. I suppose you are alluding to the Concession. I don't care a pin for suspicion. If I were the rogue I have been painted, I should move the Law Courts to rehabilitate my character; but as I am not, I do not need assistance, and shall treat slander with contempt."

Lempriere, dropping into abstraction, dwelt fondly on the fantastic operations of the modern syndicate, and its remoteness from the mental capacity of the public. "How lucky," thought he, "these combinations are so fashionable. That inimitable circumstance has saved my conscience all through the piece. When a syndicate swindles, no individual is guilty—the members being comparable to a firing party of soldiers called upon to execute a comrade. Each man thinks he has picked a blank cartridge, and exempts himself from the odium of having sacrificed a fellow creature. The collective conduct of the syndicate is identical—it may defraud and ruin the widow and the orphan, but the individual member escapes from the throes of remorse. Ah, it is as nice to have companions in rascality as it is to have their society in misfortune."

"But, my dear George," said Lempriere, detaching himself from reverie, "I have never told you that I embraced Murkwoop and assisted Corelli mainly because I have a secret ambition."

Lambert junior waited, a trifle embarrassed.

"I was vain enough to aspire to have my name associated with a monumental act of public beneficence. I aimed to have myself described as a benefactor of my species—as one who had employed a portion of his wealth to mitigate the sufferings of fellow creatures."

"A splendid vanity—a noble——"

"And so," hastily interrupted Lempriere, colouring slightly, "I accepted the conditions of that confounded legacy, and formed Corelli's syndicate. The temptation to celebrate myself by a public benefaction had peculiar charms after I had observed how Mr. Tumbledownditty played his part to distinguish himself."

"The man who obtained a peerage for giving so many people the needle?"

"Precisely. His charity was enormous. Well, I was debating whether it was worth my while to undergo durance at Murkwoop, when the happy idea of cheaply connecting myself with a splendid act of public charity riveted my fancy and silenced my scruples. I said to myself I would be principally concerned in founding and endowing a wing to a hospital, and perpetuate my name along a lengthening chain of admiring posterity."

"And as a reward for——"

"No, George, not as a reward; but, as a

recognition of a public service by a public man, I ought—er—er——"

"To be treated with the same consideration——"

"Exactly, George. A wing to a hospital, with twenty beds, and well endowed, should—er——"

"Should certainly secure you a peerage."

"I think so. A grateful country need hardly be stingy of a patent that only provides a red-cushioned seat in a somewhat dreary House."

"And you would be forsaking the Commons where expectations are plentiful."

"Well, you see, the Member of Parliament is not what he used to be. Once he was a man you turned round to look after as he walked up the street. But now," and the M. P. sighed deeply, "he is the mere puppet of an arrogant caucus."

The Member for Breeze spoke from experience. He had believed in the freedom and buoyancy of Parliamentary life. Alas! the freedom was fettered by democratic dictation—the buoyancy was checked by debates and division bells.

"But, my boy," parentally continued Lempriere, "I must discontinue to talk of my personal wishes—I must think of yours. You are bent on trying to track this criminal; and I have asked you here to receive an important piece of intelligence. When Corelli and I were walking the moor, we came across a man watching the mansion through a telescope. A rougher looking brute I had never met. His face

was striking—reminding of a monkey more than man. His eyes were horrible—squinting murder, indeed. Do you know, George, I actually forgot to mention this circumstance either at the inquest or to the police. My memory," said the ex-banker, tapping his cranium upraidingly, "is not so good as it was. However, there is the information, and it may aid your efforts. It is a mystery why the fellow, having disabled Corelli, should have gone the length of shooting him."

The gentlemen now settled down to luncheon. It was no use to go hungry because they were unhappy. As the meal dawdled they returned to their several schemes—the gentlemanly plot for obtaining a peerage—the snare for entangling a fugitive murderer.

CHAPTER XXII

THE young lawyer in quest of Corelli's destroyer had scarcely formed any definite plan of pursuit. He hastily believed he should trap the criminal, and should render credit to the *rôle* of amateur detective. Many doubted whether he would succeed; and Gerald Seldon brushed the sleeve of his rusty coat in perplexity as he appreciated the task Lambert had undertaken. "However," said the barrister, adjusting his wig and gown, "I hope he will catch the blackguard, for then he will marry an heiress."

Lambert found himself that evening at the village of X——. It was a crooked little place, with one respectable inn styled the "King's Head." This house of modest entertainment rejoiced in the hospitality of sheltering and feeding the young solicitor. The dinner was not planned to tickle his palate. The viands were plain; the beer small; the wine unchristened and risky. The breakfast next morning was the best production. Prime bacon and new-laid eggs form a delicious fare; and the guest sighed to think of the scarcity of the latter in London. A similar reflection was troubling another person, sitting opposite, who was consuming the same dish with

a relish which bespoke unbounded approval. The stranger was middle-sized and of strong build. His bearing was confident, and now and then he developed an uncouthness hardly modified by the details of his appearance. His complexion was swarthy. He had a short, scrubby beard, twinkling eyes, and habiliments embracing a singular mixture of town and country cuts. His coat reminded you of a city clerk, while his breeches and boots represented rusticity. His harsh features, harsh voice, and harsh manners failed to enliven his personality; and Lambert was setting him down as a person unfit for conversation, when the stranger himself started to put this opinion to the test.

"From London, sir, I suppose?"

The solicitor drily admitted he hailed from that stupendous congregation of residential incongruities.

"Thought so," grunted the stranger.

Lambert remained silent, trusting the breakfaster would preserve a similar disposition. Not so, however.

"I'll bet anything you're not a bagman."

"A bagman!" mildly echoed Lambert, looking fondly at the leather receptacle he carried diurnally to Lincoln's Inn.

"You're not a knight of the road," said the man, thrusting home a fork-full of food.

"Really now," thought Lambert, invoking his legal philosophy, "do I look like a highwayman?"

"No—not a bit—you're not a commercial."

"Your remarks are ambiguous, sir."

"Oh are they? Well you're a lawyer—not a detective."

Lambert experienced the intuitive sensation that admits the existence of superior wisdom. You may be very apt in this and that; but this and that do not specialise or confer dexterity in singularities.

"No—of course not," said the gruff one, ramming down another mouthful. "You're a professional from Lincoln's Inn."

Lambert, in spite of his inferiority, managed to keep his temper.

"I know what you're after," cried the stranger, triumphantly mixing tea and cream.

Lambert, usually an all-round lawyer, was now fairly cornered.

"You and I are on the same tack, and it strikes me we'd better be partners in the gamble."

Lambert could only say, "Indeed!"

"You don't like my style, I know."

The lawyer faintly dissented.

"No—I know you don't. You'll like it presently, though."

The lawyer awaited a further manifestation.

"Look here," said the stranger, ravishing another cup of tea, "you and I must work together to catch an infernal villain—a name we might give to piety people who swindle and murder according to Cocker."

"Really, sir, your remarks are perfect enigmas."

"I'll tell you what's not an enigma."

"Well, sir?"

"That you're the son of your father."

The young solicitor was actually blushing.

"Yes, the son of your father—of respectable and respected old George Lambert, solicitor, of Lincoln's Inn."

Lambert junior relented. "This fellow," mused he, "was rough, but really—er—well——"

"Of course; and why not? However, mysteries don't pay. I'll come to the point. You're after the murderer of Victor Corelli. Don't deny it; I know. If you don't want to spoil sport, we'll go into partnership. You're a little surprised?"

"I am," admitted the lawyer, startled into astonishment.

"I'm after him, too," said the man, tilting his chair backwards and thrusting his hands in his pockets. "You're in business with your father, and your firm have offered a reward. The Government have offered a second, and Mr. Basil Lempriere has offered a third. I mean to bag the lot. You spoil my game, I'll spoil yours."

This language, uncompromising though it was, greatly comforted Lambert; and he studied the strong face and form before him with a keen sense of relief. He had passed through three villages, and only received grins and comic allusions in exchange for serious enquiries; and, disappointed and disheartened, he had begun to discredit his powers in the *rôle* of amateur detective.

There was a pause, the stranger employing his toothpick and calmly eyeing the ceiling.

"You are, I assume," began Lambert, some hesitation afflicting him, "you, I believe, are—er——"

"Of course I am. You've hit it. Yes, I'm a private detective—middle-aged, sharp, knowing, damned conceited! What do you think?"

In the instant allowed him Lambert had no time to think.

"What put me on the scent? You wonder? Of course you do. I'm not surprised. Tell you presently."

And then, in agreeable terms, Lambert junior and Jonathan Hatwood agreed to become partners in following the trail of the Murkwoop murderer.

"Got a stake in the business, eh?"

Lambert coloured as he remembered its delicacy.

"We shall agree. Knew we should. Don't take offence, but—you did look jolly green."

Lambert junior was looking jolly red.

"Yes, you did look jolly green."

The young solicitor vainly essayed a sickly smile.

"Yes, you did look jolly green," chuckled Hatwood. "I followed you up, heard your enquiries, but no, I didn't laugh. No, 'pon honour, I didn't laugh." And Hatwood tossed off his last cup of tea.

"Yes, I'm a detective on my own account," explained Hatwood, crossing his legs. "I know

all about the legacy, about Basil Lempriere, his detention at Murkwoop, and so forth. The Treasury are watching — were watching — him. A detective was down here, in this very village, his eyes all round him, watching the legatee."

"It was very shabby of the Government to doubt Mr. Lempriere's honour."

"It was stupid to doubt his sanity," corrected Hatwood.

"Mr. Lempriere is—er—most honourable, and ——"

"Exactly; but what does it matter? Government would be fools not to watch. They're trustees of the public. The public wants money as much as Government. Of course it does." And Lambert was left in a field of controversy he didn't like.

"The detective down here was my cousin. His name was Bolton. On the night Corelli was murdered Bolton died."

"Indeed! I'm sorry."

"In the room above this," said Hatwood, pointing with his toothpick.

Lambert ventured a few consolatory platitudes.

"Bolton was a wary fellow—every inch a detective. His game was to watch whether Lempriere took train from B——. How was he to do it? He couldn't lodge in B——. The fat would have been in the fire in no time. He couldn't be daily dodging Lempriere's shadow. Well, he took quarters here. But how was he to be sure of his game? That was a nobbler.

Bolton solved it. Every inch a detective, he got hold of a railway porter at B——. He treated him; made a pal of him; fixed him up to spot Lempriere. The porter was willing, but coy. He had had presents from Lempriere, but Bolton's tips were bigger. Still, the porter wouldn't peech in slang, but would blow on him by signs. He didn't mind spying, but didn't want to split. Bolton—every inch a detective—was equal to the difficulty. He arranged signals—neither red lights nor blue. Tell you about them presently."

"Very ingenious," cried the lawyer, forgetting professional reserve.

"Of course the porter was to bag a pull if the game feathered. Bolton gave gilt-edged promises. Every rascal has his price. Gold is the best gammon. Nothing troubles conscience like an empty pocket."

Lambert was decently shocked and discreetly silent. This was not Lincoln's Inn, nor the spirit of Lincoln's Inn!

On the night Corelli was murdered, Bolton felt unwell—suffered from his heart. He didn't meet the porter—somebody else did. He was brought back by a rough fellow, who propped him up against the door-post and then scuttled off like mad."

The detective paused and, seeing the lawyer was impressed, used his toothpick.

"But who murdered Corelli?"

"The vagabond who brought back Bolton."

"You really think, Mr. Hatwood——"

"He is a burglar Scotland Yard has been watching for years."

"The man may be a burglar, but he might pause before——"

"Mr. Lambert," said Hatwood significantly, "that ruffian would take a life as indifferently as he would pinch the light out of a penny dip."

CHAPTER XXIII

"Now, Mr. Mannikin, tell your story in your own way," said detective Hatwood to a little old man, very grey, very wrinkled, and very dirty. He looked for all the world what he was—a veritable shoemaker.

Resembling many of his craft, Mr. Mannikin was a born orator. His speeches were at par with the rappings he bestowed on his customers' boots, and his monotonous eloquence would sometimes somnolently affect his auditors. But, as his voice was grating and his knuckles incessantly tapped the table, his hearers were made sufficiently uneasy to maintain, in most instances, unqualified wakefulness. Being an orator, Mr. Mannikin favoured particular attitudes, and he was trying to squeeze himself into one of these when invited by Hatwood to tell his story in his own way.

"Gentlemen," said the shoemaker, who thought his own way far superior to any other, "I made great strides into friendship with the late Mr. Bolton. Him and I"—Mr. Mannikin loved language but despised grammar—"had many colloquial campaigns, as the saying is, as he leaned over the lower half of the obstacle to ingress to my shop"—meaning the half door, with slab on top, that enabled him to interview customers on

his doorstep. "Yes; and in those conversational encounters I acquired," said Mannikin, giving his spectacles a learned flourish, "much erudite insight into the inquisitorial habits of those extraordinary men who pass the summer and winter of their lives, as the saying is, in hunting down, incarcerating, and executing different sections of their fellow creatures."

This style of delivery was fatal to speedy elucidation; and Lambert junior was about to hint as much, but a warning pressure on his knee by the detective forbade him.

"Well, gentlemen," said the little cobbler, consequentially rubbing his spectacles, "in the afternoon which forewent the night so full of horror and anguish to the relatives of poor Mr. Bolton, a customer of mine with corns—shooting corns, gentlemen, as the saying is—besought my assistance to elaborate some accommodating protruberances on the uppers of his boots—for I have a fine stock of leather, and I am a widower, gentlemen. Well, I started on this errand of mercy, gentlemen, and was wending my way to my customer with corns—hard and shooting corns—when I encountered a—er—a baboon."

"A baboon!" half shouted the lawyer.

"Sir," gravely explained the shoemaker, "the Lord had not made the moving object I met in the image of man. It is veraciously to be averred he wore corduroys, and had important parts of his functional frame buttoned up in a pea-jacket. But, gentlemen, his anatomical delineation,

styled the physiognomy, was a conformable reproduction or counterpart of the head and face appertaining to that savage, hideous, and formidable beast of the forest, the baboon!"

The little cobbler peered through each glass of his spectacles, and sagely beamed on his audience.

"Now, Mr. Mannikin," mildly urged Hatwood, whose roughness had remarkably abated, having, indeed, been merely simulated, "do you mind telling us exactly what passed from the moment of that meeting between you and the—er—baboon? Tell it in your own way; but, if you will be so kind, give it me in language I can take down for evidence. You, of course, understand," said the artful detective "the sort of words wanted in a court of law."

"I think so, gentlemen," answered the flattered little cobbler. "I have given evidence in my time against poachers, and my wisdom in the matter of testimony was greatly enlarged when I gave principal evidence against two predatory boys who had wickedly pilfered and appropriated one dozen and a half of winter cabbages."

"You have had your turn in the witness box, I can see," cheerfully answered Hatwood.

"Well, gentlemen, natural like, I turned and looked after that animalised man, and then I saw he had stopped and was looking after me. I was afraid, that I was, and I don't mind saying so, for I am a widower, gentlemen, as the saying is, and I was right down afraid. As I looked back he scowled horribly, and made me shiver with

fear. I did not run, but I turned away and hurried on, and did not again look behind."

"One moment, please," interrupted Hatwood, who was rapidly taking notes. "Thank you," he added, glancing up hopefully.

"Yes, gentlemen," said Mannikin, "I hurried on; but as I went I could not help thinking of that man's face. I kept on thinking and thinking, and, as I thought and thought, it gradually worked into my mind that he was a robber, and was after breaking into my shop to steal my stock of leather"—at bare thought of which tremendous outrage the little cobbler, who under the stress of excitement had dropped his long words, wiped his brow and groaned aloud.

"Yes, gentlemen, it struck me he would break into my shop and steal my stock of leather—a fine stock, gentlemen; and I am a widower, as the saying is; and that belief grew and grew, and I couldn't go on. 'Hang the corns!' thought I—'hang them, hard or soft! My leather is my living; I must not lose that.' It was mean of me to leave my customer in pain, for I am a curer of corns, as the saying is, but, being a widower, gentlemen, I had no one to mind the shop. So I was cowardly, and I couldn't help it. I turned back, and gave up my customer, and hastened to reach home before the robber could be there. The road narrows a bit just before the village is reached, and off on the left side is a lane which runs to a footpath leading to the parish church. As I came near to the lane I heard

voices. I went tip-toe to the corner, and craned my neck round the hedge. Guess my surprise, gentlemen, when I saw Bolton, the detective, and the baboon man talking earnestly together. I could not hear what passed, but they were in warm conversation, and Bolton seemed to be laying down the law in fine style. The baboon brute was quite crestfallen, and was seeming as sheepish as before he was scowling. I waited a few seconds, and then crept away. That night the same baboon fellow brought Bolton back to the inn. The detective was pale and walking heavily. I was in the passage, a few paces from the entrance, and I saw the baboon place Bolton against the door-post, and then run away like mad."

"In what direction did he run?" inquired Hatwood, holding up a finger to emphasize the reply.

"In the direction of Murkwoop Moor. I came to the door, and distinctly saw his retreating form."

"In the direction of Murkwoop Moor!" supplemented Hatwood, giving strong vocal significance to the sentence.

CHAPTER XXIV

"WHAT is your next step, Mr. Hatwood?" asked Lambert, with proper humility.

"I mean to shove the little shoemaker against the peeching porter."

"And what do you expect from that?"

"You will soon see when we get the curiosities together."

The puzzled man of law took time to consider.

"Ah! Mr. Mannikin, here you are, and you know your book, I bet," exclaimed Hatwood, as the little cobbler strutted into the "King's Head," decked in his Sunday best, his face and hands testifying the power of soap and water when joined in a purifying compact.

"You know your book, Mr. Mannikin, I'll bet my life," reiterated the detective, in high glee.

Mr. Mannikin did not repudiate the charge. Nay, his twinkling eye and enjoyment of a pinch of snuff predicted immense confidence in his said book.

"And pray, Mr. Hatwood," asked Lambert, aside, the simplicity of ten years of legal training brimming into the question, "what may we hope to learn from this mysterious book?"

"Ah, Mr. Lambert," laughed the detective,

rubbing his hands, "this job is not clean enough for your class. I have been instructing our cobbling friend in the art of telling a whopper."

"A whopper?" repeated George, reflectively.

"You have, of course, forgotten your youth; but, when I was a lad, a whopper meant a lie. It has the same meaning to-day." And leaving the young lawyer to ruminate, Hatwood took the little shoemaker to task and engaged him in a lengthy conference.

Presently, a decent, old-fashioned barouche rolled up to the inn. A pair of horses, more remarkable for strength than beauty, and a coachman, uneasy in his tunic, and particularly dissatisfied with a hat too large for his head, completed the equipage which was to trundle the detective and his party to the village of B——.

"And how is Mrs. Butcher to-day?" heartily inquired Hatwood of the buxom landlady of "The Bell."

Beaming with smiles, the genial Mrs. Butcher ushered her guests into the room used by Mr. Lempriere, bestowing sundry inquisitive glances at the quaint figure of the little cobbler.

"Now, Mrs. Butcher, meat and drink, and as briskly as possible," cried Hatwood, flinging himself into a chair.

The landlady simpered, Lambert was mum, and the little shoemaker sniffed expectantly.

Mrs. Butcher received the order with gratitude. She was retiring, when her eye rested once more on Mannikin. Pausing compassionately, she

observed, with exquisite discretion, "Would the gentleman over there like a little drop of——?"

"I should!" blurted the cobbler.

CHAPTER XXV

THE railway porter who had hired himself as a spy upon Lempriere was a pudding-faced man, whose primary mundane consideration was the comfortable condition of his stomach. This covetous corner of his anatomy had prompted him into a compact to betray his benefactor. The porter's family had tasted abundantly of the ex-banker's charity. Lempriere possessed the customary spark of benevolence in his breast, and now and again it dilated into quite a respectable glow. Since his confinement at Murkwoop, he had found liberality an interesting pastime. He did not practice it sedulously, but conformed to its demands with commendable assiduity; and to keep himself *au courant* with its needs, he commissioned Mrs. Butcher—the kindest of souls—to warn him of domestic misfortunes befalling in the village of B——. Intelligence of calamities of this class was thenceforth duly forwarded to Murkwoop, and the afflicted homes were quickly provided with every delicacy sympathy and cash could invoke; the sympathy—an article meant to cheer, and assuage sorrow—being specially compounded by excellent Mrs. Butcher. It chanced that the youngest boy of the pudding-faced porter fell sick of the measles, and

Lempriere's generosity was invited. At once he was in evidence, paying for medical skill and sustaining the little creature through each stage of convalescence. Still, the jellies, the soups, and the dainties, which upheld the little fellow's constitution, had not entered the greedy mouth of the stomach-loving porter. He knew they had speeded his boy's recovery; but, notwithstanding this touching incident, their effect had neither humanised his heart nor his memory. His sense of gratitude sank to zero when opposed to the practical arguments of appetite.

Mrs. Butcher's curiosity was painfully aroused as she showed Ben Double, the pudding-faced porter, into the room occupied by her guests. Double was not at ease. He laboured under apprehensive surprise at the permission extended to him by the station-master to call at "The Bell" and introduce himself to gentlemen who desired his society. He had previously observed Hatwood in conversation with the station-master, and, noting that they looked towards him once or twice, inferred he was connected with their dialogue. Consequently, he entered the room reluctantly, regarding everybody present with lethargic distrust.

"Very pleased to see you, Mr. Double," said Hatwood. "Dare say you'd like to earn a little money? Portering must be poor pay."

"Don't suppose as I should object, sir," answered the porter, twisting his cap and slowly seating himself.

"Well, Double," said Hatwood, bringing his topic plump upon the carpet, "we want you to describe the man who met you on the high road the night Victor Corelli was murdered."

The porter gazed sluggishly at the detective, and then shook his head without a word.

"Hum," thought Hatwood. "You're either devilish artful, or—hum." Finishing this sententious reflection, he said in the same tone, "You know the man I mean, Double—the rough-looking fellow who accosted you on the high road about a mile from this village."

"Never saw a man on the high road that night," surlily answered the porter.

The little cobbler, who had been quietly balancing his spectacles upside down, looking through first one glass and then the other, now addressed the porter in his pompous way, saying, "Friend, you are wandering from the straight path of veracity. On the night of that distressing occurrence you kept an appointment with a man who, I have no manner of doubt, became the murderer of the unhappy foreigner."

Ben Double shuffled in his seat, and his eyes travelled from face to face; but, if he had information, his obstinate reticence was not to be easily overcome. "I tell yer," he said, the twang of a snarl in his tone, "I never spoke to no bloke on that there night, and I was not on the high road neither."

"You were not on the high road?" instantly rapped out the detective. "Why not, seeing

Bolton had payed you handsomely in advance to keep your appointments?"

But Hatwood, whose sharp precision greatly disturbed the porter, gave him no time to reply or recover.

"Look here, Ben Double, it is no use beating about the bush. I, as well as my friend here," said Hatwood, jerking his thumb at the cobbler, "know perfectly that Bolton instructed a rough man to meet you on the high road, on that day, to receive your signals. Also that he did meet you. Is it not so, Mr. Mannikin?"

"Assuredly," said the shoemaker, peering cautiously through his spectacles. "I myself heard Bolton deliver himself to the rough man in these terms:—'Go and meet Ben Double on the high road, and tell him I am ill, and that he is to give the signals to you. He will either nod his head and hand you an old railway ticket, or he will shake his head and snap finger and thumb.' That's what I heard," calmly concluded the cobbler.

If Double was in torture before he was in terror now. He was jammed into a corner—an excruciating situation when no amount of squeezing can give comfort to the victim. Now, for the first time, his conscience bore a weight he wished to heave overboard. But how could it be lifted? The truth might act as a lever; but if the load slipped wouldn't there be a bump! However, a clean breast must be risked. That sharp-eyed detective had something up his sleeve—Double

was sure of that; so, as lies were of no account, he would try the wisdom of truth.

"I ain't a going to deny what was what any longer," he began in a husky voice. "But I do ask, gentlemen, as that you will not take on so as to blow upon me to the station-master or Mr. Lempriere. What is done is done, and I'm sorry for it."

"Never fear," replied Hatwood. "Ease yourself of your story, and we three alone will take care of it."

The porter twisted his cap and took a pull at the whisky and water the detective had pushed towards him.

"I think as I can see, gentlemen, that yer know all about what Mr. Bolton got me to do?"

Hatwood nodded.

"Well, sir, on the night of the murder I did not see Mr. Bolton where we used to meet. A rough looking bloke, with an ugly mug, came up, and says he, 'Mate, I'm from Bolton. What's the blooming signal?' I said nothing, but shook my head and snapped. 'All right, mate,' says he, and he turned away and walked off."

"That was all that happened?"

"That was all, sir," replied Double, extremely miserable.

"Now, Double, you and Mr. Mannikin compare notes of this fellow's personal appearance," said the detective, leaning back in his chair and directing a watchful eye.

It was diverting to witness the consequential little

cobbler drawing a wordy picture of the monster who might have meant to pillage his stock of leather. Poor Double imperfectly understood the flowery periods of the shoemaker's description. It was, however, clear to the cute detective that both porter and cobbler had met the same man. Satisfied on this score, worthy Hatwood, gratified with his stratagem, put a sovereign into the porter's hand and dismissed him with the assurance that he might rest easy and slumber peacefully, as neither Lempriere nor station-master should hear one word of his harmless treachery.

CHAPTER XXVI

"THAT whopper was worth a fiver," remarked Hatwood, as he paced the station of B—— in company with Lambert junior. "I could not, you know, have told it myself. I don't refer to scruples. Not a bit. Lies in our business are necessaries—nay, essentials. Nothing could be gained without them. This case demanded an essential lie. That clown was cunning. He has to-day had a lesson in his own line," grimly added the detective.

"You coached the cobbler?" said Lambert, amused at his companion's audacity.

"Why, certainly. I couldn't have scored otherwise. Double, seeing two against him, caved in."

"You could not, then, have relied upon yourself alone?"

"Not a bit. I was forced to be artful, and gammoned the cobbler to keep me company. Mannikin had not overheard the gab between Bolton and the—er—baboon. That was awkward. I was cock-sure of Bolton's game, so I made up my mind to tackle the cobbler. I told him I was certain he had heard Bolton say so-and-so. I flattered him. I pressed him. I persuaded him in—er—the usual way," continued Hatwood, jingling some loose coin in his pocket as he spoke. "I told the little man to think—to think twice—to think thrice—to be quite sure Bolton had not

said so-and-so. I urged him to be positive, to be —er—and—er—well, bless my soul, if the little chap didn't end by brightening up and remembering the very thing I wanted."

"This is a wrinkle," thought Lambert junior, "but—not for Lincoln's Inn."

"Bolton had told me his plant, but Bolton was dead. The porter was cunning. I knew it—had to reckon with it. I was no good alone. His cunning would have helped him—so would his thick head. The first, to see it was my word against his; the second, to doggedly hold out. I was in a fix. I had to invent. I had to put a tale on the cobbler's lips. I happened to put the one that capped. The cobbler had met the baboon. I was sure Double had seen the same animal. The shoemaker was the shot to bring down the porter. Directly Double saw Mannikin had twigged the signals, he was sewn up. Didn't you see how flabbergasted he was?"

"It was a capital subterfuge; but such an artifice can only be justified," began the lawyer in his best metaphysical style.

"I know it can. Subterfuge—humph! 'Tis a common malady, and if a man could die of the complaint not an insurance office in christendom would take a detective. Subterfuge! Cunning must be met by craft. It puts two and two together in a brace of shakes. That Ben Double is a callous dog. To fill his belly he'd drown a household. He is a beastly prig—might be a thief or murderer, but cunning controls his vice.

See how he refused to commit himself, except by signals! Oh, believe me, Mr. Lambert, that fellow is a sort of Plaster of Paris Iago!"

The heavy train steamed into the station. The enormous engine—so truly significant of power, speed, and peril—emitted uproarious snorts as it passed the lawyer and detective. The driver, bearded, broad-shouldered, bronzed, eyed the intending passengers with the air of majestic superiority which naturally belongs to unlimited responsibility. These pigmies—even so, for the nonce—would be committed to his care, to be preserved in life or crushed to death as fate or he might decree. Insanity in his brain or malice in his heart, and, fiendishly inspired, he could dash his living load down the endless chasm of eternity. But if the driver was giving play to this reckless sort of philosophy, the stoker was freshening under very different views. As he sat on the side of the engine, proclaiming his familiarity with smuts, coal, and grease, a glance of recognition passed between him and Hatwood.

"Ah, my friend," cried the detective, leaving Lambert and keeping pace with the slowly moving train, "is Fiddles at the terminus?"

"That he is, sir," said the stoker with alacrity.

"I think I've a job for him."

"He'll be glad to hear that," grinned the stoker.

"It will not be the first he has had, eh?"

"No, sir."

And then the ready detective saluted the driver and handed up his cigar case.

"We're off now, sir," cried the stoker, turning to his duties.

Hurrying to rejoin Lambert, the lawyer and the detective were soon travelling at the rate of forty miles an hour towards the varying vapours of our indescribable metropolis.

. . . . .

"Now, Mr. Lambert," said Hatwood, stepping from the train at the terminus, "I'll show you a man with a smart memory."

"Indeed."

"He fixes a fellow's likeness as fast as photography. They call him Fiddles. There's another chap, a lamp man, who's also devilish quick. But Fiddles beats him hollow. To fix faces in the memory is a cerebral knack. You want it well sharpened in our trade."

"But these men must see thousands of faces every day."

"Exactly. The recollection of a striking one is thereby assured. The face which frightened the cobbler, and sent him dancing home to guard his leather, is one Fiddles should have spotted."

"You think this ruffian has been here?"

"Believe so," answered the detective. "Hallo!" he shouted to a passing porter. "Is Tom anywhere about?"

"At dinner, sir," answered the man, touching his cap.

"Tom is the lamp man," explained Hatwood.

By this time they had reached the office of the station-master. Entering and shaking hands with

this official, Hatwood promptly introduced the solicitor, and in the next breath communicated his business.

"Ah, it is not the first time you have wanted Fiddles."

"A useful chap—smart and ready. He ought to have been a detective."

"We are called to our occupations by planetary influence," said the station-master, who had a turn for astrology.

"Well, the planet that set Fiddles to collect tickets took small account of his abilities," remarked Hatwood, with a shrug.

At this point Fiddles appeared, and respectfully saluted the detective. The collector was a middle-aged man, with an intelligent cast of face, set off with twinkling eyes. The musical soubriquet of Fiddles had been bestowed for simplicity, his name being Bufferbunt. In a few pictorial sentences Hatwood delivered to Fiddles a likeness of the man whom Mannikin had described. A twinkle in the collector's eyes, and a twitch of his nose, informed the detective his phrase portrait had told, and reflected a face Fiddles remembered.

"He's been through this station twice, sir," said Fiddles, eschewing all hesitation.

"When was the last occasion?" interrogated Hatwood.

"Only ten days ago," answered the collector, his confidence increasing.

"You are quite sure?"

"I am, sir," said Fiddles, his nose twitching nervously.

"When was he first through here?"

"About a fortnight afore the second time, sir. He came through with a ticket he'd smeared over, and all the print was out of it. I stopp'd him, and there was a jolly shine, he swearing and going on, and not telling where he came from, and we getting the inspector, and he wanting to fight us, and cussing and swearing at everybody, and—and——"

"I see," said Hatwood. "The row reminds you of the first occasion. Now, what circumstance fixes the second?"

"A very tough one, sir. He was just kind enough to take upon himself to punch my blooming head," answered Fiddles, illustrating his statement by giving his pate a gentle tap with his half-clenched hand.

Hatwood's face brightened, and happy expectations permeated his breast. He perceived in Fiddles a valuable instrument for broadening the trail of the Murkwoop murderer.

"Describe the scene, sir? That I will, sir," said the collector, gathering himself up for a speech. "Well, sir, the second time he came through—that is last month, sir—when he came up I recognised him, and the row and everything, and when he handed me his ticket I saw it was smeared as before, and I stopped him, and he tried to push through, and I prevented him, and took hold of his arm and gave him a

shove, and he swore, and I stuck to him, and he landed me a punch on the head, and there was a jolly row, and others came and helped, and up came the inspector, and we hauled him into the office, and he kicked up a shindy, and wouldn't say where he came from, and offered to pay double fare, and swore, and pulled out a lot of sovereigns, and out came a medicine bottle, and it was full of rum, and it fell and broke, and made an awful stink, and he offered money for the punch on the head, and the inspector told me to take it, and—and—— Why, Tom, you remember that fellow who landed me a punch on the head last month, don't you?"

"Aye, that I do," said Tom, the lamp man, who, unperceived, had entered the office of the station-master.

CHAPTER XXVII

Mr. Lempriere was indulging in a delicious literary dream. While resting his head on his left hand, his right itched to imprint the next sentence on a filling sheet of woven note. Literary efforts are frequently bereft of anticipated delight by reason of an obstinate sluggishness which enervates the faculties when most they wish to flourish under ethereal dews of lofty imagination. But not so with Lempriere. His ideas were unblighted by the numbness which mars the power to produce impressions at first hand. He was coining phrases of love—tender passages exhaled from the rich resources of parental fondness. Nothing is so simple as to multiply vows of attachment, especially if a fruitful foundation really inhabits the breast. In Lempriere's bosom a father's love had long obtained a firm occupation, and he was explaining the genial vagaries of this amiable tenant in a playful epistle to his darling daughter.

Mr. Lempriere's letter unfolded plaintive murmurings against a separation which estranged parent and child from the blissful fetters pendant to domestic ties. The father was living in a solitude surrounded by air and sterility. The

daughter was residing in a house standing amidst thousands of others, whose tenants minded their own affairs and ignored the presence of neighbours. But if Lempriere was disposed to complain of the vileness of a deserted state, he swiftly turned aside from despondency. Was he not writing in expectation of Josephine's coming to Murkwoop? Was he not painting a glowing picture portraying the happy time they would pass in conversation, reading, and music? Ah, yes; and sighs and smiles were the accessories. Presently his eye lost the blank abstraction induced by visionary reverie, and thenceforward he bent his head and plied his pen until art and invention were alike exhausted, and nothing remained but to subscribe his signature.

Not many days afterwards the London train steamed into the station of the village of B——, and Miss Lempriere alighted at the platform. She had come to tarry at Murkwoop—not at all enviable in March—and was bravely determined to face the monotonous surroundings of the moor and the disheartening stillness of the sepulchral mansion.

"Do you know, my dear," remarked Lempriere to his daughter as they sat over breakfast, "I fear I shall not be able to introduce you to my friend, Gaspar St. John. Ever since the inquest on poor Corelli, and that disgraceful tirade in the *Breeze Mercury*, he has studiously avoided me, and returned to his habits of hard work."

"How very unsociable of him."

"Very indeed. I thought I had reclaimed him from his nightly rambles on that horrid moor," said Lempriere, giving an uncomfortable shiver while glancing disapprovingly through the window. "But he justifies his exclusiveness by the plea that he is writing the concluding chapters of a learned book."

"You hardly ever see him, then?"

"Scarcely ever. He takes his constitutional after sundown, and then I am mostly in my arm-chair."

"One would think he would be tired, and be glad of your society."

"Ah, you would; but these students are so unreasonable that really they are hardly ever tired. St. John often works day and night, and —would you believe it?—all for love of literary work, which will never bring him a penny of profit."

"Very eccentric of him, to be sure," said the young lady, forgetting that numberless votaries to music and art gain naught but a title to vanity.

"Job Jenkins is not to be bought, or I would bribe him to take a note of invitation to St. John to dine with us this evening. But Jenkins has been cautioned."

"Has Mr. St. John read that abusive article in the *Breeze Mercury*?"

"Yes, my dear; I showed it to him. He is a cynical man," said Lempriere, sighing. "He remarked that public men must put up with the

inconveniences of hostile criticism. I don't mind adverse criticism. It is damnable, but it can be endured. Pardon the adjective, my love. I am your father, you know; and when I am irritated my feelings foster a little license in profanity."

"How unsympathetic of Mr. St. John! He ought at least to have been kind."

"Kindness was not in it, my child. Not merely did he comment in that caustic style of his, but he unhandsomely reasoned out the circumstances of Corelli's death in such a form as to show, by logical inference, that I could reasonably be suspected of the murder. Upon my soul, my dear Josephine, he put everything together so skilfully, that I was thunderstruck to find how easy it would be to place me under suspicion."

"But he surely is not so horrid as to suspect you?"

"As a gentleman, I believe, he does not suspect me. But a gentleman and a logician are very different beings. St. John always tries to be both; but the opinions of the two characters seldom tally. The logician is always running away with the gentleman. When he dealt with the murder, he put the case, and drew conclusions, as a logician; and so, as a logician, he may, I suppose, suspect me of the crime. His arguments were polite, but pitiless; and they were put, as he more than once assured me, purely from a logician's stand-point. Confound the logicians!" cried the ex-banker, busily buttering a piece of toast.

"It is terribly cruel that a set of insulting scientific rules should be able to make anybody appear an inhuman monster."

"Exactly, my dear," said Lempriere, helping himself to tongue. "But it is not only Gaspar St. John who reasons out abstract theories. I received, the other day, a letter from a member of the Scarum Club, telling me to cheer up and let the *Breeze Mercury* go to——"

Mr. Lempriere coughed, pulled himself together, and shyly took another piece of toast.

"Ah, Josephine, that crime has cost me a weight of anxiety; for I, in my turn, might give credence to a logical suspicion."

"Of whom, papa?"

"Of St. John himself."

"Of Mr. St. John?"

"Er—yes. I ought not to mention my thoughts, perhaps; but, logically, St. John could be suspected of the murder. He was Corelli's enemy, my dear—his bitter enemy!"

"His bitter enemy!" and Josephine's eyes widened.

"Yes, indeed. Corelli was an Italian; and St. John hates Italians."

In saying this Mr. Lempriere was scarcely serious. He confessed later that logic was not exactly in his line, and was a little too slippery for his taste.

"George has written very confidently," said Josephine. "He believes Mr. Hatwood is certain to lay his hands on the culprit."

"Nothing would please me better," replied Lempriere, vigorously mutilating the breast of a pigeon.

The re-united father and daughter now drifted into a review of Josephine's engagement to George Lambert junior. From this they strayed into a dialogue touching the character and courageous sentiments of the straight and emphatic Martella. Next, they discussed and weighed the social and legal merits of Mr. Gerald Seldon; and the mention of the barrister's name naturally beguiled Josephine into a graphic description of the stirring meeting held in his chambers in Pump Court, Temple.

"Ah, Josephine, few men understand how to float companies without plunder," sighed Lempriere, spreading *pate de foie gras* on his toast. "Plunder, my dear, means commission."

"And what is the real significance of commission?"

"Correctly speaking, a reward for special knowledge. Everything nowadays is specialised, and commissions have been brought within the dignity."

"But Mr. Seldon said there is such a prejudice against commissions."

"So there is, my dear, particularly on the part of those people who never have the ability to earn them. Such people are really as opportunist as the commission is itself."

"Jealousy, then, is the foundation of their disapproval?"

"Yes, indeed," answered the ex-banker, biting a mouthful of toast and casting up his eyes as he swallowed it. "Jealousy is truly at the bottom of the popular dislike of commissions. But let the complainants try to float schemes without them. Only let them try to ——"

Mr. Lempriere's utterance was again impeded by the pleasures of the *pate de foie gras*.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Our story has flown to the East End, and, having winged its way down the Whitechapel road, has imprudently entered a public-house and called for a drop of something to drink. It is never possible to grace the bar of a gin palace without partaking of some liquid composition hot or cold. In the bar of the palace, wherein our tale has taken temporary refuge, were four gossiping women imbibing quarterns of gin, that were despatched with a celerity which illustrated the cultivated powers of this social quartette. The plan of drinking devised by these bibulous ladies reflected the highest credit on their ingenuity. The lady whose turn had arrived to stand treat—who was styled for the nonce "My dear"—poured the contents of the quartern into three small glasses, and, deftly delivering these to her companions, delicately averted her head and talked volubly until one was empty. Receiving this, she re-filled from the measure, which, being thus uncargoed, became an object of special consideration. Participating in this expectant interest, the custodian, placing it on the counter with significant force, darted a crushing look of command on the lady whose privilege it was to replenish. The entertainer designate,

gracefully poising the vessel between finger and thumb, invited the barman's attention to its unsatisfactory condition. This gentleman, winking politely, brimmed it with the vivifying cordial, and the previous formalities were ceremoniously renewed. In this way each lady duly regaled her companions, and each in order of succession was compelled to call or compound for a quartern more. It is needless to affirm that such an admirable method of keeping the convivial ball rolling was conducive to keen and uncurbed pleasure in this select and limited party.

One member of the group was a small, ill-looking woman, with cadaverous face sallowed by vice and gin. Her bleary eyes and croaking voice distinguished her from the rest, who were fat, robust, and big. While they talked shrilly and laughed boisterously, the sallow woman was silent, taciturn, and depressed. If she smiled or exhibited the least appreciation of the passing jest, she slowly drew apart her bluish lips and exposed a set of irregular fangs; but more often she moaned and swayed herself and otherwise betrayed a troubled state of mind. Her uncompanionable conduct at last attracted general attention, and the lady whose hospitality was next in request, before ordering, bent down and admonished the unhappy woman in no uncertain language.

"I'll tell yer what it is, Sal, if I'd got that feller for a husband, I'd do it—yes, drat me, I'd do it!"

"Ah, yer don't know him. He'd kill me if I did," groaned the sallow woman.

"Bear up, my gal," returned the other, "and have a will of yer own. Show him yer mean to be treated as a wife."

"Ah, yer don't know what a brute he is—how he hits and bruises me for nothing at all," moaned Sal.

"Then why don't yer do something to earn yer whacking, yer fool!" exclaimed another woman, exalting her nose in scorn.

"That's what I say," rejoined the first speaker. "The more the reason for to do it, Sal," continued the dame, pouring out the beguiling fluid and handing a glass to the object of her solicitude. "Do it, Sal, my dear," said her friend, nudging her coaxingly once or twice.

"I'm afraid he'd murder me," pleaded the miserable creature.

"Look here, gals," exclaimed the lady who had broached the topic. "Here's Sally Bloader going short of the shiners while her beast of a husband is going his larks and getting the demon tremens."

The demon tremens were something which mightily shocked the rugged virtue of this stout and indignant dame, who, to intensify her condemnation of the conduct of Sally's spouse, went on to declare that she, the speaker, was an honest woman with eight children; and that though she did not mean to repudiate her weakness for gin, her aversion to every other moral

failing was uncompromising and impregnable.

"Yes," resumed this specimen of sturdy uprightness, "if I were Sal, I'd do it, yes—that I would! Yes; and I'd think, too, it was the right thing for to do it."

The indefinite phrase "to do" belongs to the infinitive mood of a highly respectable verb. We are hence favoured with a part of the sense of the counsel urged by this shrill and implacable lady. But the "it" was altogether another question, notwithstanding a practical definition was vaguely suggested by the elbow nudges she imparted. When, however, this much abused impersonal pronoun had been emphasised several times, Sal began to sombrely reflect. She accepted the glass of gin proffered by her adviser, and tossed it off with the ravenousness of the inveterate dram drinker. More quarterns followed, everybody paying except Sal. She, wretched creature, kept the pace going by borrowing from the author of the phrase, "I'd do it." Presently the liquor begat boldness; and, whereas before she was feeble and unstable, she now became talkative and defiant. Taking aside the woman whose laconic precepts had encouraged her, the two engaged in confidential whispers; and then Sal, swallowing one more fascinating draught, leeringly informed the company she was about to absent herself, but would not be away long. Shuffling through the swing doors, she directed her steps to a stifling court at right angles to a narrow street leading from Whitechapel road.

Crawling up several flights of rickety stairs in a tumble-down house, Sal ascended to the third storey, and taking a key from her pocket tremblingly unlocked a door. Gaining entrance to a small back room, she paused and peered suspiciously around. Putting a finger to her lips, and grinning hideously, she carefully closed the door and locked it. These fantastic precautions, save the last, originated possibly from the circulating effect of the drink; for the room was vacant, although a mingled smell of spirits and tobacco betokened recent occupation. A confused bed stood in one corner, and a table with a few chairs were ranged here and there in comfortless disorder. Some rags of carpet and a tattered rug straggled about the floor, and a dismantled curtain partly concealed the window. On the mantel-piece was a bottle half-full of gin; and suspended above was a print in flaming colours representing our Saviour bearing the burden of the cross.

Sal moved on tip-toe to the fire-place, and stooping down reached her arm up the chimney. Searching eagerly, her hand essayed to clutch an object which seemed to be eluding her grasp. Fumbling and muttering, emotions of disappointed perplexity played on her sallow visage. At length a gleam of exultation struggled into her leaden eyes, and the next instant she withdrew her hand holding a handkerchief smothered with soot and wrapped over something round. It was carefully folded and tied with

several knots. Cautiously undoing these, she gloated over the silent face of a beautiful gold watch. In the first transport of her joy she could not repress the inclination to dance a shaky jig. This she accompanied to the harsh notes of a guttural chant. Stowing the watch within her stays, she stole from the room and down the rickety stairs. Issuing into the stifling court, she hastened thence to the narrow street. From there she trotted along the Whitechapel road until she stopped at a pawnbroker's shop. Stealthily casting her eyes about to see whether she was noticed, she slipped slyly into one of those private consulting boxes specially arranged to isolate the individual borrower.

"Where did you get this from?" asked the pawnbroker's assistant, looking suspiciously at his client as he opened the watch and examined the works.

"It ain't mine, nor my husband's neither," answered the woman evasively. "It's one he's got to mend, and we've run short of chink."

"Is your husband a——" The assistant was too engrossed in a minute examination of the watch to think of finishing his question.

"He's a watchmaker, my husband is, and times are bad," nervously mumbled the woman.

"How much do you want on this?" asked the assistant, looking up flushed, and catching his breath as he spoke.

"Just a quid to keep us going," replied Sal.

"All right," said the man, hastily preparing

the ticket. "There you are," he said, clapping a sovereign on the counter. The woman greedily grabbed the coin, shuffled off, and hied back to the public-house. Rejoining her companions, they hailed her with crowings of bibulous merriment; and for the rest of the afternoon she was a heroine who had vindicated her disputed right to a due proportion of her husband's shiners.

Within an hour of the pawning transaction the assistant had hailed a cab and was speeding at high pressure to Scotland Yard. Entering the portals of that old established firm, he bounced with some precipitation against a gentleman standing in the doorway.

"I'm not insured against accidents," said the stranger good-humouredly, at the same time narrowly scanning the new-comer's excited countenance.

"I want to give important information about that Murkwoop——"

"Here, stop a moment!" cried the gentleman, forcibly dragging the assistant aside. "Step this way. That information"—hurriedly whispering words of deep meaning to the flushed provider of loans at liberal interest—"belongs to me."

"Look here, then," gasped the assistant, snapping open the case of the watch pawned by the unhappy Sal.

Mr. Jonathan Hatwood gazed long and intently at the glistening interior. Thoughtfully deciphering some characters artistically engraved, he read —"Victor Corelli, 1872."

CHAPTER XXIX

"'Ere, I say, wot d'yer mean?" yelled Mr. Bill Bloader, who was reclining on a confused bed in a dirty room up rickety stairs in a stifling court of a narrow street leading from the Whitechapel road.

Mr. Bill Bloader was apparently unconscious of his absolutely solitary condition. Beside himself the only quickened object in the room was a stunted candle flickering a half defunct flame. Nevertheless he continued to bellow, "'Ere, I say, wot d'yer mean?" Possibly Mr. Bloader was dreaming, or was being transported by his fancy into an aimless mood of enquiry. After two or three further petitions in the same strain, he threw an arm beneath his bullet-head and lapsed into snorting slumber.

A nearer examination of Bloader's features was enough to scare and freeze the beholder. As he lay on the confused bed, his eyelids but half closed, it was observable a hideous squint distorted beady eyes set deep behind beetling brows. His short hair grew so extremely low that he seemed devoid of forehead; and his black bristling beard shrouded lips surmounted by a broken nose. It was a shocking face, clothed in coarsest of skins, and wearing the vile vestments

of every vicious impulse. In fatally indelible lines, lodged lust, ignorance, and brutality. Repulsive in hue, shape, and character, it indexed the revolting proclivities which render men dangerous and loathsome.

Bloader continued to doze fitfully, and, when half awake, to vociferate violent execrations. His bloated features and fetid breath combined to betray the strength of his recent potations. All at once his limbs writhed, his face discoloured, and in a moment a fierce spasm thrilled through and quivered his frame. Awaking with a horrid howl, he straightened his legs with a racking jerk, and, raising himself on his quaking elbow, gazed fearfully round the room. Catching sight of a bottle of gin on the mantel-piece, he looked at it long and hard. It appeared to fascinate and exult him. He leered at it; laughed at it; roared and shook his fist at it. "Ha, ha, ha, my pretty! Ha, ha, ha ,my beauty!" Bawling thus, and trembling all over, he dragged himself from the bed to the mantel-piece and drank a stiff draught of the liquor; then, smacking his swollen lips, he turned and rolled back; but so stricken and riotous were his nerves that, in clutching the bed-clothes, his fingers knotted themselves convulsively for several agonizing seconds.

"Now, Bill, yer fool, you'll be getting a fit of the horrors, yer will, if yer go on to the drink in this marndering way," said a little ill-looking woman, entering the room and coming to the side of the bed.

"Look 'ere, Sal," yelled Bloader, springing frantically into a sitting posture and shaking his fist in half stupefied fury, "I mean jest to drink as much as I damn well like! So there!" And Bloader, sinking back exhausted, succeeded in drawing the bedclothes to his chin, growling and cursing as he viciously watched the woman with his squinting eyes.

"Yes, yer fool, and then yer'll go blabbing and getting yerself into quod, and praps strung up—yer fool!"

"Wot!" roared the ruffian, his jaws moving stiffly. "I get swung up for that there job? No fear! Nab me for robbing a bloomin' body? Ha, ha, ha! The dead don't peech, my gal. Bolton, the artful teck, won't string up any more on us. 'E's a dead'un now, and the dead don't peech, my gal. No—not they." And here, Bloader, sanguine of the silence of the dead, prepared himself for that sensuous sleep which is the unrestorative attendant of alcoholic saturation.

"Ye're a fool, Bill," urged the ill-looking woman, unconvinced by her husband's reasoning. "Yer hasn't read the newspaper this Sunday past. Don't yer know what the perlice have been saying about the dokements that yer took? Suppose the nabbers got hold on yer, what d'yer think yer'd say about them there?"

"Say!" growled Bloader, imprecating a horrid oath. "I'll tell yer wot I'd say. I'd say, look 'ere, thet them there dokements were shifted from

the pocket of a bloke as was as dead as a doorpost long afore I set eyes on 'im. Now, Sal, thet's wot I'd say—d'yer see?"

"And who'd believe yer?" queried the woman in a dubious voice.

"Believe me!" bawled the brute, astonished at the risk of incredulity suggested by his helpmate.

"Yes, Bill, who'd believe yer? D'yer think the beak would? D'yer think that feller in the wig and scarlet at the Bailey would? No—not they!" And Sal, assured of the improbability thus portrayed, lifted the bottle from the mantelpiece and disposed of some gin in the usual way.

"I tell yer there ain't none but Bolton as knows I was nigh Murkwoop on thet there night; and Bolton 'as toed the bucket, and won't string up me nor any other bloke. D'yer think I'd a kep them there bloomin' dokements if Bolton wus kickin'? No—not me! Bill Bloader knows too jolly well, 'e does, 'ow to take care of 'is bloomin' neck. Ha, ha, ha!"

At this moment there was a smothered noise outside, then a rustling movement, then a hushed murmur. While Bill and Sal were rallying their gin-steeped senses to solve the meaning of these sounds, the door was burst violently open, and the next instant Bloader, who had sprung from the bed, was raving and struggling in the powerful grasp of several police officers. He was arrested, hand-cuffed, and dragged to jail for the wilful murder of Signor Victor Corelli!

CHAPTER XXX

London was aflame with the tidings—the capture of the Murkwoop murderer! Fleet Street rang with uproar. News-boys screeched and raced and contested for customers. Merchants, lawyers, clerks devoured and discussed the report. A cautious gentleman, pressing a penny between finger and thumb, secured his paper while passing his coin. A spectacled barrister, tall and gaunt, received his "Star" over many heads, and went his way reading as he walked. An absent student, fumbling for copper, produced silver, was lost on his "Globe" and forgot his change. The intelligence spread; news-boys thrived; Hatwood was praised; the Lamberts advertised. The hum of conversation on all sides proclaimed the capture of the Murkwoop murderer!

Bill Bloader, apprehended in London, was transferred to the county wherein lay the scene of his crime. Arriving there, he was charged before a full bench of magistrates. Formal evidence was given, and the hearing adjourned. Subsequently, the examination of Lempriere and others being concluded, the case for the Crown was completed. The drink-soddened brute was committed for trial, and withdrew defiantly from the dock.

Sally Bloader was indicted on some charge connected with the pawning of the watch. The sunken creature seemed prostrated by grief as she realised that her duplicity had placed her Bill in imminent peril of the gallows. In spite of vice, drink, crime—the chief ingredients of her worthless existence—she fostered a sort of affection for the man who abused and beat her, but who for all that was her husband. Yes, Bloader was married—he was that ; but his connubial relations were scarcely felicitous. He and the woman had been disciples of sin from youth. They had married for partnership in plunder. Thus they had prosecuted burglaries in mutual confidence. A mistress is a doubtful commodity ; and Bloader, having this presentiment, married his paramour.

"Ah, my dear Lambert," sighed Lempriere, as he left the Court in company with the senior lawyer, "what a sight have we been witnessing. Crime, drink, and pawnbrokers hand in glove with hangman and gallows!"

"Nay," answered the old lawyer, in a tone of gentle reproof. "You are too severe upon a highly reputable and useful class of men. Many of us in our time have sought the aid of a pawnbroker, although, as age advances, we are apt to avoid allusion to it. If, however, we have to refer to it, we treat the transaction as a mild escapade, and set it down in the season of our wild oats sowing. For my part, I regard the pawnbroker as a beneficent speck in the horizon of life. He is always respectable—he is made so by Act of

Parliament. He keeps respectable hours—also regulated by Statute. His rate of interest is commendably high—as permitted by the law of the land. Then, after all, what is there in the fact that he examines the works of your watch and offers less than you ask? Do not mortgagees employ a surveyor to go over your real estate? Do they not offer their (not your) two-thirds of their (not your) value of your property? Tell me, again, the difference between paying for a pawn-ticket and discharging the costs of an indenture? No, my dear Lempriere, pawning is as creditable as any kind of borrowing. The only distinction is that when you borrow of a pawnbroker you must always be careful never to mention it."

Miss Josephine Lempriere met George Lambert junior on Murkwoop moor that evening. The estimable young lady had naturally acquiesced in the specious truisms pronounced by her fond father to excuse his coquetry in some out-of-the-way corners of the great Concession. The Member for Breeze was clear at last of the lowering cloud which threatened to tarnish the brightness of his banking renown, and nothing now remained but to free him from the logical stigma fastened upon him by fate or Gaspar St. John. Providence had indeed smiled. It had acted auspiciously in nabbing Bill Bloader and clapping him into a cramped cell. His trial and execution would be the next turn on the spit of events, and these formidable displays would cheer and lighten two lovable

hearts. It oddly fell out that human woe meted human happiness. Bill Bloader would be sentenced and hanged. Josephine and George could rejoice and be married.

CHAPTER XXXI

The pomp and paraphernalia that accompany our criminal jurisdiction in assize towns are calculated to widen the eyes of the cosmopolitan foreigner. He might misapprehend the province of the quaintly-habited javelin men, and the fanfare of the trumpets might dislocate his composure; but the gorgeous costume of the Sheriff and the stately raiment of the Judge could not fail to elicit spontaneous admiration of this finely-flavoured item in our constitutional bill of fare.

The assize which was opening in the county town of C—— was commenced with the customary Church service—Religion giving Justice a preliminary dig to keep him grave and straight. Much popular interest was concentred on this assize. A sensational murder trial was brewing, and people of different degrees were preparing to be entertained. Bill Bloader was to be solemnly arraigned, and curiosity was rampant, owing to the socially unique quality of his victim.

From the date of his committal Bloader had spent his time in spinning a novel defence. Although these clever rareties mostly miss the mark, they claim the virtue of usefulness, since they almost always hang the culprit and advertise

the lawyer. But Bloader's attitude differed from the conduct affected by the majority of fashionable criminals. He declined to dodge round the tale of his innocence just as a moth dodges about a flame, merely to enter one side in order to emerge scorched on the other. No; that was not his plan. He made one point, tricked up in one style, fixed in one particular spot, and tacked on to one parcel of time. Mr. Skillman, his counsel, felt extremely confident. He beheld victory and his own glory in the ascendant. It was very creditable on the part of the learned gentleman that he meant to exculpate Bloader—never mind the means, the method, or the truth.

The Court was densely crowded. Ladies in gay and sumptuous toilets were seated in variegated clusters. Groups of gentlemen, more soberly clad, were discussing the situation in subdued tones. In a small circle of earnest talkers stood Mr. Lempriere. In a little throng of robed barristers Lambert junior led the topic. Amidst a bevy of young ladies sat the anxious Josephine. Presently, silence being claimed, sounds were hushed and the audience rose as the Judge entered and presided on the bench. A moment later eager faces were watching the dock with breathless expectation. A pause of suspense, and one heard doors opening and the marching of many feet; and then Bloader stood forward confronting his Lordship and scanning the faces of the jury.

The prisoner was, if anything, but little

altered. Enforced sobriety had mitigated a few of the traces of his unbridled libations; but his coarse, wild-animal aspect remained. He looked scarcely sentient, except that cunning glittered in his squinting eyes—the only glint of reason. He pleaded Not Guilty, and the trial commenced.

The case for the Crown was simplicity itself. Still, it was purely circumstantial. The meeting between Bolton and Bloader was graphically related by the little cobbler; also that the prisoner was Bolton's escort as far as the door of the inn. Next came Double, the pudding-faced porter, who identified Bloader as the messenger sent by Bolton for the signals. Abundant proof was propounded with a view to demonstrating that the accused, from the time of his having left Bolton propped up against the door-post of the "King's Head," had more than ample opportunity to reach Murkwoop moor and overtake and waylay the unfortunate Italian. Fiddles, the collector, characteristically explained Bloader's conduct at the Terminus, and the repeated defacement of the railway ticket. The pawnbroker's assistant swore to the pawning of the watch; and the police produced bank-notes and valuables, the property of Corelli, which had been found concealed in the prisoner's room. Finally, Lempriere deposed that three important documents, which the prisoner had sewn up in the mattress of his bed, bore the signatures of himself, of the Lamberts, and of the murdered man.

Mr. Skillman rose to address the jury. He

was an expert advocate, and he began his speech by frankly admitting the truth of the trenchant facts adduced by the prosecution. He conceded, without hesitation, that Bill Bloader, when arrested, was in actual possession of the articles the jury had inspected; and he boldly pledged himself to establish the proposition that the possession of this property simpliciter was absolutely insufficient to justify the charge of murder.

"It is necessary to confess," said Mr. Skillman, heaving an audible sigh, "that the prisoner has for years pursued the nefarious but profitable profession of housebreaking. He has been committed to jail, and has suffered different sentences for burglaries; but, in the course of a long career of successful depredation, he has never been convicted of violence or brutality. Of late years his robberies—invariably conducted on an elaborate scale—had effectively baffled the vigilance of the police. Nevertheless, he was a marked man; and lived under the ban of incessant surveillance; and amongst the numerous detectives to whom he was known was Detective Bolton, who died on the night the Italian was murdered.

"I should not dream, gentlemen, of concealing the circumstance that Bloader was lurking in the vicinity of Murkwoop for the purpose of preparing for a robbery at the mansion. The fame of the Frogmore Legacy, and the reported wealth of Mr. Lempriere, led the prisoner to cherish sanguine hopes of a superb booty. Stimulated

by the vision of a splendid and easy spoil, he travelled to Murkwoop and reconnoitred the mansion. He was thus engaged when he was astonished at being confronted by Detective Bolton, who immediately charged him with the scheme of robbery he really meditated. Bloader had never suspected a detective was lodged in the rustic garments with which Bolton was disguised; and he was dumbfounded and staggered on finding himself rightly accused. He did not conceal, nay, confessed, his design; and he promised at once to renounce it, and to return forthwith to Whitechapel.

"Now, gentlemen, what transpired to detain Bloader near Murkwoop? The intended robbery had become hopeless, and suspicion was dancing at his heels and dogging his footsteps. Why, then, did he stay?" The learned counsel ingeniously indicated how Bloader had become Bolton's emissary to obtain the porter's signals. "Having met Ben Double and received his signs, he returned to the detective, who was waiting on the highway a short distance from X—. Bolton, who was ill, declared himself to be much worse, and the prisoner assisted him back to the 'King's Head.' He left him reclining against the doorpost of the inn, and then started for London along the road leading to B—. Compelled to pass the northern extremity of the now notorious Murkwoop moor, he effected a detour, avoiding the high road, and taking to the open ground, overgrown with long grass, directed his steps to a point some two

miles beyond the north-east boundary. Suddenly, the length of the grass being considerable, he plunged against, and was nearly prostrated over, a formidable obstacle in his path. Recovering his balance, and stooping to discover the cause, he was amazed to behold the corpse of Corelli, weltering in the blood which had flowed with his life! Gentlemen," continued Mr. Skillman, impressively, "he saw the ill-fated Italian had been murdered, but not robbed; and the temptation to rifle the corpse of the valuables upon it was too potent to be resisted. Yes, gentlemen, the accused stands self-condemned of the odious offence of robbing the dead; but of the horrible crime of murder he is incontestably guiltless.

"This may be a difficult problem, especially as my unhappy client is, by the wisdom of the laws of this enlightened land, precluded from appearing before you in the character of a witness. By the lips of his counsel alone can he unfold the theory of his innocence. In order to successfully affirm that the prisoner became possessed of the property by despoiling the dead, I must advance and sustain three theories. As to the first, gentlemen, I will invite you to ask yourselves whether this lamented Italian was really Victor Corelli, or whether he was really one who, by birth, was Victor Gaspiani?

"Many years ago, in the city of Naples, two lovers linked their vows, and yielded to the rapture of mutual adoration. But their passion was unhallowed by truth or purity. The youth—a

coward, a traitor—concealed a clandestine marriage —a living wife. The maiden—defying conscience and religion—submitted to a desolating desire. It was the old, old tale. Deception! Disgrace! Ruin! The youth, terrified, fled. The girl, sunk in despair, died by her own hand! Her name was Dorothy St. John. Her defiler—Victor Gaspiani! The girl had a brother. His name was Gaspar St. John. He vowed vengeance, and pursued the seducer for years. Tired and haunted, Victor Gaspiani spread a rumour of his death, and, changing his name to Victor Corelli, sought permanent refuge in a South American Republic.

"Now, gentlemen, had this unfortunate Italian a living enemy eager to scent his trail and slay him in cold blood? The answer must be an affirmative. Gaspar St. John, by his conduct, had avowed the length of his hate—his capacity for the direst, nay, the deadliest, form of revenge. Was Gaspar St. John living? The answer must again be an affirmative. Was he in England at the time this tragedy was enacted? For the third time the answer must be an affirmative. He was undoubtedly in this country; but his place of retreat was, and is, a profound and impenetrable mystery.

"Lastly, gentlemen, I ask whether a suspicious stranger was present on Murkwoop moor on the night the Italian was murdered? I declare to you, gentlemen, I am convinced of the truth of the prisoner's asseveration—that, a short time before he came into contact with the corpse, he

met a solitary horseman riding at a desperate pace, who disappeared in the distance upon Murkwoop moor. The rider passed quite close; the night was cloudless; and the dress he wore was distinctly visible. As he dashed by—blindly and recklessly—his form was hid and his face concealed in the folds and cover of a cloak and hood!"

. . . . . .

The Judge summed up. He was severely dispassionate. The Jury retired. Their verdict was—Guilty.

The prisoner stood up to receive sentence, and, according to usage, was asked whether he had anything to urge against the penalty of death. As he merely hung his head and mumbled some indistinguishable words, the Judge was commencing his solemn exordium, when, with a horrid howl, Bloader sprang like a bloodhound on the warders, and fought with a strength and fury which threatened to annihilate his opponents. The scene was exciting and extraordinary. Ladies shrieked and fainted. Men stood pale and anxious. The Judge sat—stern and immovable. In and around the dock was a surging mass of constables and warders, and amidst them all was the raging figure of Bloader, battling, raving, and striking with demoniacal force and tenacity. Overcome and cowed at last, his hair torn, teeth knocked out, and blood streaming from mouth and forehead, he stood, held in the vice of many grasps, glaring, panting,

and listening to the weighty words which condemned his body to a dreaded death, and commended his soul to the mercy of his Maker.

CHAPTER XXXII

LEMPRIERE was back in London. He had travelled from Mayfair to be present at the trial of Bloader; and that villain was awaiting his impending doom while the flowers were budding into beauty, and Nature was rejoicing in a rich renewal of vernal splendour. The condemned man bore himself bravely enough, and protested his innocence with the usual lustiness. He had not attempted further violence. On the contrary, he seemed to be settling down to his fate with a boorish resignation which smacked of the pathetic. The prison chaplain came and prayed, and implored him to confess and sue for spiritual peace. But Bloader's heart was not constructed of impressionable material; and to him religion was a sort of fad or business. Parsons and their equivalents had never troubled his conceptions; and as for any belief in a beatific future, his denseness and obduracy were as impervious as they were incurable.

Mr. Lempriere was possessed of that sensitive faculty of endless vibrations designated Conscience — an uncomfortable estate sometimes, since entailing many of the jarring prerogatives

attendant on the seisin of a scolding wife. With Mr. Lempriere Conscience was wrath and masterful, and was goading the representative of Breeze democracy into a deal of curdling disquietude. It was growing rebellious, kicking over established authority, and was having a rough-and-tumble with that gentlemanly sentiment, Honour. Mr. Lempriere had laboured to believe the trial of Bloader had ended satisfactorily, and would put a proper termination to the monstrous career of an abominable ruffian. But this pacifying opinion did not square his interfering, cavilling, and pestering Conscience. Honour had argued that he, Mr. Lempriere, must not cast suspicion on his friend, Mr. St. John. Honour had reminded him that St. John's revelation was a sacred confidence not to be infracted on any pretence. Hence, Conscience, adopting a contrary tone, was challenged by Honour to ethical combat. Round after round ensued, unsparing pugnacity marking the scrimmage. For a spell, philosophic scuffles rendered victory doubtful, until sturdy Conscience, giving mincing Honour a punch in the somewhere, brought the strife to a crisis; and then Mr. Lempriere paid a visit to Pump Court, Temple, to take advice about settling the dispute.

"Very happy to see you," said Gerald Seldon, smiling courteously as the ex-banker shook hands and dropped into a chair.

Mr. Lempriere was unhappy in not being able, unassisted, to extricate himself from his difficulty.

"I sought you at once, instead of going first to my solicitor."

"Don't apologise, pray. Recollect I am happy to meet you as a relative."

"I was thinking of professional etiquette," quavered Lempriere.

"We bend sometimes, and bow etiquette into the passage," smiled Seldon, calmly elbowing his arm-chair.

The ex-banker opened the ball with decent indecision. He was, he admitted, inferentially accusing his friend, St. John, the student and man of letters, of a dastardly crime. It was hard lines, and he whispered many secret curses to soothe the anguish of his heart.

"Your business with me is, of course, very unpleasant," remarked Seldon, languidly dangling his pince-nez.

"Extremely unpleasant. It means really that I reluctantly entertain a most extraordinary suspicion."

"I understand."

"But, of course—er—only a logical suspicion."

"Precisely."

"And—er—all the same, I—er—cannot bring myself to—er—really suppose that a man of the stamp of St. John could yield to such a gross inclination as—er—to commit murder. It is so intensely vulgar, that—er——" Mr. Lempriere paused for help.

"But you argue, I believe, that St. John can be legitimately suspected?" said Seldon, coolly knotting the guard of his pince-nez.

"Yes—er—logically," gasped Lempriere.

"Why, then, entertain scruples? You have information which, you conceive, should be brought to the knowledge of the police?"

"Yes; that St. John was living at Murkwoop when Corelli was murdered."

"Exactly. Is that the only information?"

"No—er—no. I am afraid there is something else. But, naturally, I wish it to seem that he is only open to be suspected—er—logically, always —er—logically."

"You would not be able to keep it in that form. It is a question of fact. Is there any matter that throws a light——"

"There is," groaned the agonised client.

"Well, pray confide it to me."

The wretched Lempriere allowed himself to be cross-examined into a detailed disclosure of how St. John was stationed on the verandah while Corelli was singing at the piano.

"I see," rejoined Seldon, reflectively. "He beheld his foe, and his face——"

"His face was ashen, livid with rage, hate—er —and Corelli turned and—er——"

"The Italian saw St. John?" asked the barrister, quickly.

"Their eyes met, and Corelli blanched."

"Recognition took place?"

"I couldn't say. I never dreamed Corelli was Gaspiani. I only thought of St. John's detestation of Italians."

"Recognition must have taken place. They

probably met afterwards, quarrelled, and Corelli, refusing a duel, was shot like a dog."

The barrister rose with his last remark and eyed Lempriere keenly.

"You think it necessary to divulge these matters?" interrogated the ex-banker, pathetically.

"If you tell anything, you should tell all."

"But it is only an inference—only—a—logical —er——"

"It is a most suspicious circumstance."

"But the murdered man was stunned first."

"Not necessarily. He refused an honourable duel, and his exasperated enemy shot him as he was turning away. He fell from his horse, and hence the bruise on his forehead."

"But," expostulated Lempriere, somewhat relieved, "you forget Corelli was killed by a shot from his own revolver—the weapon he had brought with him to present to me."

Again the lawyer was one too many for the ex-banker. Taking a turn or two up and down the room, Seldon paused and said:

"It is useless questioning how the shot was fired. The men—enraged and beyond control—became formidable to each other; and St. John, wrenching Corelli's revolver from his grasp, slew the Italian with his own weapon."

"He had drawn it out in——"

"He had drawn it in self-defence," interrupted Seldon; "and it was fired and flung away by the revengeful St. John."

"I feel I am most dishonourable in exposing St. John."

"Oh, dear no. Honour knows no law that prohibits the step you are taking. An innocent man has been convicted."

"Well, can you screen me from saying much?"

"I can. But let me think," and Seldon seated himself and leaned his head on his hand. "You have said," he resumed, saddling his nose with his pince-nez, "that after the inquest St. John kept studiously out of your way?"

"That is so."

"And you say that if, after his recognition of Corelli, he had a meeting of revenge in view, he had only to descend from the verandah, mount his horse, and——"

"Pray don't ask me to surmise. To divest myself of facts is terrible enough."

"Quite so. Well, I understand that when next you met him he appeared pale and thoughtful, and his manner had undergone a strange alteration?"

Lempriere made a desperate attempt to limit his admissions to the circumscribed area of a problem in logic. Seldon politely ignored the endeavour, and pursued his damning questions with merciless courtesy.

"Now, I wish you," said the barrister, interlacing his hands and crossing his knees, "to let me put a plain question. Do you really think St. John was on the moor for the purpose of——"

"Pray, pray, don't!" burst in Lempriere, rising from his chair and pacing the room in agitation. "I don't know what—nay, I dare not think! I want you to advise me. You know everything. Tell me what I ought to do; but—pray don't ask me what I think." And Lempriere mopped his forehead and looked uncommonly distressed.

It does not appear what was the exact tenor of the advice administered by Seldon to his rich relative. Lempriere absorbed it with difficulty; his face lengthened, his body writhed, and he manifested many symptoms peculiar to a disturbance of the nervous system. It was, however, arranged he should forthwith undertake a journey to Murkwoop and demand an immediate interview with Gaspar St. John.

"You see, Seldon," said Lempriere, after he had regained the use of his tongue, the lawyer's opinion having crippled its activity, "I have, by seeing you at the onset, only once broken faith with St. John. Had I gone to Lambert senior, and afterwards we had come on here together, I must have broken faith twice. In playing the part of traitor, it is always gratifying to feel you have done so with delicacy, and with the minimum of injustice to the object of your betrayal."

"Quite so," assented the worldly Seldon. "The conduct that is palliative is the most creditable and convenient. Shall my clerk telegraph to Job Jenkins to meet you at the station of B——?"

"Thank you, if you would be so kind," said Lempriere, cordially shaking Seldon's hand. Hurrying away, he brought himself downstairs into the court, and there he paused for reflection immediately in front of the inanimate pump.

"Ah," soliloquised the ex-banker, looking hard at the passive monster, "your mouth is always open, but there flow no slanders from its interior. You may in your time, Mr. Pump, have put many people in pain, but you had the good sense never to show the least sign of compunction. I, a benighted mortal, come to this court, against my will, to cast suspicion upon—perhaps to condemn —a fellow creature, who may be as innocent as an unborn babe. Not a bad emblem," he remarked, breaking away from his original cogitations. "Not at all a bad emblem for a court full of lawyers. They pump us of our lies. They pump us of the truth. They pump us of their fees. They pump us of——"

Basil Lempriere was whirled away to the village of B——. Alighting from the train, he found the trusty Job Jenkins in waiting with the dogcart. Not omitting a brief visit to "The Bell," and a short attack on some of its comforts, he mounted the seat and drove at a smart pace to Murkwoop.

"And how is Mr. St. John?" inquired Lempriere, as they neared the sombre moor.

"I don't know, sir."

"Oh! Then you don't see much of him?"

"I don't see anything of him," returned the laconic Job.

"Indeed! Why, is he never out of his rooms?"

"He is never in them, sir."

"Never in them! What do you mean?"

"He has left Murkwoop."

"Left Murkwoop!" shouted Lempriere, astonished.

"Yes, sir," answered Job, his eyes fixed steadily on the back of the horse.

"How long has he been away?"

"About two months, sir."

"Turn the horse round!"

"Sir!" cried Jenkins, surprised out of his composure.

"Turn the horse round, and back to B——. Quick!—quick!"

Jenkins did as he was bidden, the dogcart rolling at a spanking speed to catch the train to London. Forgetting farewells—or to take his ticket, or notice salutes — Lempriere rushed through the station—into the train—into space —into London—into a cab—into Pump Court, Temple!

CHAPTER XXXIII

"I was struck," said St. John, "by the story of the Naples girl told by the young solicitor, Lambert, and repeated to me by Lempriere. It rang strangely in my ears. Corelli nearly fainted while listening to it, and had to fly to restoratives."

"His guilty conscience — aye, his guilty conscience."

"He said he would never re-visit Italy—told Lempriere so—the caitiff! He feared to meet me, thinking I had retired to Naples. He knew if we met it would be a duel unto death. The craven loved life. He is living still—the spirit never perishes—but where?"

"We must not judge, it is presumptuous, and mercy must temper hate," returned the second speaker; and thereafter St. John and his companion silently watched the scene of witching peacefulness spreading everywhere beyond at their feet.

Our story has travelled at a nimble bound to the glowing scenery of melodious Italy. A gorgeous panorama is witnessed from the crest of Capodimonte. At its base thrives populous Naples, commanding its famous bay, whose

pellucid waters are studded with charming islets — countless promontories dividing its azure depths. These form a vision of beauty and colour alike captivating and absorbing to the idealistic worshiper.

The sun had hardly risen above the horizon ere a solitary figure stood motionless on the brow of Capodimonte. His head was bent, his arms folded, and his manner denoted earnest thought. Naples still slumbered, and the lovely view was bathed in blissful stillness. Nothing stirred, save gentle zephyrs, and the stately form of the lonely man remained entranced in contemplation. Presently, raising a hand, the hood was pushed from the noble brow of Gaspar St. John.

There was a second form now on the summit. Unnoticed by St. John, a man in ecclesiastic garb had slowly climbed the hill. Crossing to where the student stood, the priest thoughtfully scanned the ascetic. Arousing from his reverie, St. John beheld the saintly face beside him. An exclamation of recognition — an affectionate greeting—a prolonged silence. It was a meeting after years of separation!

"It is pleasant," said the priest, "to renew friendship amidst scenes sacred to our last conversation and farewell. Ah, Gaspar, our ambitions have greatly altered. Once we aimed at scaling the loftiest heights of astronomical science—exploring starry fields and planetary paths remotely conceived by human prescience. We are changed. You, author of a new philo-

sophy, quicken intellectual curiosity. I, a simple priest, am the humble servant of our loving Saviour."

Then the two men had fallen into conversation on Victor Gaspiani—as in part recorded above—and St. John, in impassioned tones, told how Corelli (his old foe) had written to Lempriere, announcing his visit to Murkwoop.

"Of course," continued St. John, "I had no idea the letter—glanced at casually—was from Victor Gaspiani. Nothing in the character of the writing appealed to my memory. So many years had flown. I believed him dead. Nothing was further from my thought than that he lived. It is true the name of Victor, and knowing Corelli was an Italian—Lempriere had said so—aroused a tempest of tormenting ire. It was natural. Victor!—so strange that it was Victor! Well, I told Lempriere everything. I was compelled. He returned noiselessly, and stood looking so scared. I had to tell him—I told him all!"

A silence ensued, broken at length by the priest, his calm voice in strong contrast to the fierce intonation of his companion.

"Inform me, Gaspar, how vengeance overtook that impenitent man; for, unhappily, he died impenitent, unless ——"

"He had short shrift. He killed my sister—according to rational sense, he directly caused her death."

"The decrees of heaven are worked by un-

erring wisdom. The choice of method—the arm commanded to wield the sword of justice—is determined there," said the priest, pointing reverentially to the sky. "But," continued the saintly man, "tell me the modes and windings whereby the toils of retribution closed round the fated Gaspiani."

"The name, the very name, even now, sends a shudder of wrath through my frame. Listen, Alonzo," and in rapid language St. John recounted the circumstances which had conspired to entice Corelli to Murkwoop.

"When I poured forth my wrong to Lempriere," exclaimed the student, his brow darkening, "I little recked the vision which would haunt my dreams—the grim tragedy that would memorise the morrow. Leaving Lempriere, I spent the day in study, striving to banish recollection. I ill succeeded; and, after dusk, I sought the silent moor, and passed hours in meditation. Returning to my room, I threw open the window and sank into melancholy musing. Again and again my excited fancy vividly beheld the winsome features of my sister —the dark, handsome face of her destroyer. I fell into fickle slumber and dreamed a mystery. The heavens gaped, and through a widening vista floated a beauteous form, waving a flaming dagger and bearing a golden scroll. Descending and standing near, the angelic form unrolled the sacred writing and raised the flashing dagger. I scanned the scroll eagerly, but the characters, weird and un-

intelligible, baffled my discernment. As I faltered I awoke; but again, ere long, I sank in mystic sleep. Once more appeared the beatific form —anew I tried to read—afresh was foiled and failed. A third time I dreamed—a third time the angel came, uplifting the flaming dagger, displaying the wondrous scroll. Dreading—desiring—I saw the words enlarging—protruding from the fabric—writing thickly traced in clotted human gore! Soon I knew what there was meant. Victor Gaspiani lived!—lived beneath the withering curse of heaven's avenging decree! Next night I heard a foreign voice singing a mournful song. I crept below—along the lonely verandah. Peering through the casement, I saw —— It was true! It was he! Victor Gaspiani lived! I drew back thinking the hour—my hour!—yes, my hour!——"

. . . . . .

Gaspar St. John was alone. With head bent and folded arms he intently gazed on Naples.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"Yes, mates, 'aving no edication 'ave done it. They'll 'ang me, thet's sartin, an' think as they've done the right thing; but arter a time, mates, they'll say as they strung'd up the wrong bloke. 'Owsoever, as I've tell'd yer afore, 'aving no edication 'ave done it, and landed me in this 'ere show."

The sober moralising above set forth emanated from the lips of Mr. Bill Bloader, as he sat on a bench in the condemned cell and awaited the approach of the day of execution with unflinching fortitude.

"I aren't goin' fur to say as I never spilled a cove's claret. Not me. I've done a sight o' blimy things, and dusted down a few folk. But it was all fair and square, an' clout fur clout; an' I niver spilled more claret than a cove cud spare, and wot did 'im good to git rid on. So it's sartin, mates, I didn't ought to be fixed up 'ere. But 'aving no edication or larning, mates, 'ave done the trick 'an landed me in this 'ere luck—wot d'you think?"

The two powerful warders guarding the culprit

looked at each other and were at loss for an answer. They were rough fellows, habituated to the hardened criminal in his varying moods of sullen defiance, mock penitence, and morose indifference; but the conduct of Bloader perplexed and disconcerted them. Since the day of sentence he had subsided into a sturdy equanimity quite at contrast with the coarse confidence he had exhibited previously to his trial. He avowed the verdict was wilfully unjust, since he had not been permitted to offer his testimony; and he prophesied the time would arrive when the Authorities would have to acknowledge they had committed a cruel and irreparable blunder. All the same he had made little real complaint of his impending fate; and seemed to regard it as a risk a man had to run who entered the house-breaking profession unassisted by scholastic attainments.

Nevertheless, Bloader caustically amused the faculty he substituted for imagination with a grim picture of the exasperating misery that would afflict Her Majesty's Ministry when they discovered they had betrayed their Sovereign into fiating the warrant for the execution of an innocent man. This original sensation was, however, associated with a feeling of excruciating revolt against the dire injustice he had experienced in being excluded from the witness box. He regarded himself seriously in the light of an unexhausted reservoir of fundamental fact; and considered that, apart from his personal evidence,

the elucidation of his plea of Not Guilty was doomed to be inconclusive. Then, seeing the Judge must have treated his testimony with dispassionate severity and judicial language, he argued within himself that had the summing up surveyed explanations he could have tendered it might have evolved a verdict of acquittal. These edifying cogitations entertained Mr. Bloader between the intervals of eating and sleeping—both which details of daily duty he conducted heartily and soundly; and occasionally he rallied the warders on their task of preserving him as a sort of big game to be duly picked off by that arch sportsman, the hangman!

"Tell yer wot it is, mates," remarked Bloader, philosophically stroking his chin, "I'm fly to turn up my toes w'en my time's come—and it's comin' darn'd quick, or I'm not reckonin' accordin' to Cocker, as the scollards say—but I wud a liked to be licked out ov style by a bloomin' gun, or at the mouth ov a cannon, so as I might 'ave felt I'd done credit to my country, or been a sort ov 'ero, so to speak, and not be chucked on a boord jest to slip underneath at the end on a rope—er—er—its thro' a 'ole I'm to slide, isn't it, mates?" queried the culprit, coolly breaking off and looking cheerily at his keepers.

The cell door opened, and Captain Hussel, the Governor of the jail, entered, followed by two warders. He was a man of severe military aspect; but, as he neared the table on which

Bloader was leaning his elbows, a gleam of pity flitted across his features. Pausing as he reached the side of the culprit, he hesitated before speaking, placing one hand on the table and the other on his hip. This pause of hesitation was due to uncertainty as to how exactly to proceed with a task of some delicacy. His embarrassment continuing, Bloader, whose chin rested on his hands, raised his squinting eyes inquiringly, but said nothing. At last, after inward debate and suggestions of scruples, Captain Hussel mastered himself and addressed the culprit in a firm voice.

"Bloader, I am about to bring in a visitor to speak with you. Pray keep calm and give way to no loud talking. You understand what I mean. It is unusual in this jail to allow a visitor to see a prisoner in his cell; but I have a motive, and for your good, in breaking the rule in this instance."

The Governor turned and moved to the doorway, followed by Bloader's squinting eyes. He looked out, politely beckoned and bowed low. The next instant, with an impressive mien, holding her riding-habit and carrying a riding-whip, Martella Seldon swept into the cell and fixed a penetrating glance on the culprit. Coming close to the table, she stopped—Bloader, sitting and motionless, his stunted brain dazed, being overpowered as by a blinding stream of glorious radiancy. Never had he beheld anything surpassing the commanding figure of this

determined woman. Her striking features, the chaste elegance of her costume, the fragrancy exhaled therefrom, her haughty air of cultured confidence, filled this rough-hewn, semi-civilised man with a host of wondrous sensations. Cowering before her he slowly rose, never once removing his fascinated gaze from her face. Then, as by magic, occurred an indefinable mutual feeling. Miss Seldon, dropping her habit and lowering her whip, yielded to an impression of compassion, which, thrilling through Bloader, raised him proudly erect before his would-be deliverer.

"Bill Bloader," began Martella, in a calm, clear voice, "I mean to save you from the gallows, if I can; but you must answer each question I put truthfully, or my power to help you will be useless."

Bloader continued, with deep respect in his bearing, to earnestly regard the fearless lady.

"I have seen Mr. Skillman, and have been at great pains to make myself master of your case; and, with Mr. Skillman's assistance——"

"Wull, lady," interrupted Bloader, a little sullenly, "wid yur kind leave, lady, I'd rather not ask Muster Skillman to do anythin' furder fur me."

"Everything now to be done shall be done by me," convincingly answered Miss Seldon.

"Thank yer kindly, lady," humbly replied Bloader. "On'y I'd jest like fur to say thet Muster Skillman sell'd me, ee did. Yus, ee done

iz best, but ee sell'd me, ee did. Ee didn't bring out the rum, lady."

Miss Seldon looked a trifle nonplussed.

"No, lady, ee didn't bring out the rum, and the genlem of the jury didn't take on wid the rum; else their say, lady, wud a bin on my side."

"Explain your meaning to me more fully," said Martella, who saw clearly there was something behind this complaint.

"Wull, lady, yer wur in the coort, an yer saw 'ow the jury took on wid my 'aving run'd away from the door ov the inn arter I 'ad left Bolton stuck up agin it. Wull, lady, I on'y run'd to git some rum at t'other inn, coz Bolton, not thinkin' as 'e wus booked, tuld me not to cum inside, an' it wus late, lady, an' I run'd to be in time to fill my bottle wid rum at the next pub, w'ich I did."

"I think I understand you," said Martella, whose quick perception flashed through and grappled the point. "You mean that the jury, having been told you met Mr. Corelli with Mr. Lempriere on the moor in the afternoon, believed you knew he was a visitor who would leave the mansion that night, and that you hastened away in order to be in time to overtake him."

"Thet's jest wot I do mean, lady; but 'aving no edication or larning, I cudn't git Muster Skillman to fix up thet there pint wid the jury. Coz, lady, it wur the rum that made me rob the carcus. I wus arf slued, lady, thet I wus, or I don't think I'd a done it."

"When you got the rum did you loiter and drink much?"

"It wus jest this, lady. I gits nigh the moor, an' I thort as I saw figgers an' eerd voices. So I sits down an' lights my pipe an' tackles my rum, an' I dozed a bit; an' w'en I cum'd too, an' wus gittin' up to go on, the cove in the cloak an' 'ood wus cumin' along full pelt."

"Galloping direct from the spot where the body was found?"

"Thet's it, lady, excep' he wusn't gallopin'."

"Not galloping?"

"He wus goin' as if ole Nick wid 'is fork wus arter 'im."

"How long did it take you to reach the corpse?"

"Arter seein' the cove wid the 'ood?"

"Yes."

"A good arf-'our. I wus done up, an' in no 'urry; but as I went furwurd I cum'd across it, an' it wus dead cold."

"You think before you sat down you heard voices?"

"I do think as I did, lady."

"Voices in altercation?"

"In wot, lady?"

"Did the voices sound as if two men were quarrelling?"

"I cudn't say, lady. I didn't wunt to meet nobody, an' wus willin' to rest, an' I puts up my pipe, an' tackled the rum, an' dozed a bit."

"Why did you deviate from the high road—

I mean, why did you not keep to the road that runs between Murkwoop Moor and the moorland that adjoins?"

"W'y didn't the Italian chap keep to the road, too? I'll tell yer w'y. Ee wus makin' a short cut to B——, jest as I wus. Thet's 'ow it wus the carcus wus found a mile-an'-a-arf an' more frum the 'igh road."

"But Mr. Corelli did not know his way except by the road."

"So Muster Skillman say, an' thet's w'y I say the cove in the 'ood did the wurk arter a row; fur it's dead sartin Muster Corelli wunt away from the road eider wid iz own free will, or else ee wus drag'd to thet there place—w'ich, I say, lady, wusn't done, coz the grass wus long, an' wud a shown the draggin', w'ich the grass didn't. An' so, lady, he went of iz own free will, an' the killin' of 'im wus done then, an' a good time afore I cum'd across the carcus."

Martella Seldon put many pertinent questions to Bloader, enforcing the importance of each by flipping her riding-whip on the table.

"W'y, lady," concluded Bloader, "I cud 'ave put thet there Italian chap out ov pain by tuckin' my finger an' thumb round iz neck. I wudn't a used a bullet—not me; an' if Bolton, the teck, wus 'ere, ee'd say, 'Bloader niver did thet there job. 'Tain't wurk as wud be done by the likes ov 'im.' Thet's wot ee'd say, so 'elp me. An' d'yer think, lady, I wud a done it w'en I 'ad an arm on me sich as this 'ere?"

As Bloader uttered this convincing query he bared and raised his herculean right arm. There was a smothered movement of preparedness on the part of the warders, but Martella, without exhibiting the slightest demur, brought her gloved hand down upon and grasped the iron muscles of the limb exposed to her inspection. With a shrug, and a gesture of acquiescence, she intimated her abundant belief in Bloader's thesis.

A few minutes later Miss Seldon had quitted the condemned cell, and was standing on the steps of the Governor's house, situated within the precincts of the jail.

"This man's lips, Captain Hussel," exclaimed Martella, "were sealed at his trial. The witness-box was closed to the very being whose life depended on his own description of events. Is it not barbarous, sir?" cried the indignant lady, raising her riding-whip, which Captain Hussel watched with cautious care. "Is it not barbarous? Everything against this man circumstantial—everything in his favour suppressed! This is called justice! And what is the remedy? A petition to a politician whose days are passed in a passion of partisan strife; whose power totters hourly on the verge of the precipice of time; whose duties are multiform—thronging the too-contracted day; whose temper is harassed by debate, and whose—oh, it is monstrous, Captain Hussel! and deserves——"

Martella, carried away by her fiery diatribe, threateningly raised her whip.

Captain Hussel drew back.

Miss Seldon, lowering her weapon, blushed.

The Captain, recovering his position, smiled.

Miss Seldon apologised.

Captain Hussel bowed.

The whip was a harmless symbol of the lady's righteous abhorrence.

CHAPTER XXXV

"Now, cousin Basil, you must cast aside all scruples and act at once. This is a very serious business."

"A very serious business, indeed, Martella," complied Mr. Lempriere, whose face was not so ruddy, and whose manner was a mixture of penitence and mild despair.

"You know, Basil, your large reward was the impetus which set Hatwood in motion. The rewards offered by a niggardly Treasury are seldom sufficient to put private detectives on the scent."

"Yes, Martella, I am conscious my reward was the allurement that led to the capture of Bloader. That confounded legacy! It killed Corelli—it will hang Bloader!" And Lempriere looked inclined to shed some of the tears he reserved for special purposes.

"It is no use lamenting the legacy. If Bloader is innocent he must and shall be saved. Unless, Basil," said Martella, her voice ringing, "you want to be accessory to another murder, you must move heaven and earth to avert this execution."

Poor Lempriere had a turbulent spirit rapping loudly against the inner side of his watch pocket. In his trouble of mind he folded his right arm across his breast—meaning to smother that rebellious spirit—and with his disengaged left he patted the bald part of his puzzled head. This attitude, and the soothing slaps self-bestowed as aforesaid, seemed to afford desired relief. He roused himself from his drooping posture and told his hasty and downright cousin to curb the clamour of her imperious tongue. He did not say this in so many words. No—not that he was afraid—he was too much the gentleman. He merely, in choice terms, informed her heaven was too far for a reprieving petition, and that on earth it would have to be delivered at the Home Office.

"But, my dear Martella," said he, his eyes averted and his lips trembling, "what an awful thing it would be to accuse Gaspar St. John of the crime, and then to find——"

"My dear Basil, take the words of a plain woman"—we trust the lady was not alluding to her personal qualities—"and ask yourself what answer common sense would give to anyone putting that question. It would say—Gaspar St. John is the guilty man!"

"But suppose it should turn out otherwise?" urged the doubting ex-banker.

"It will turn out as I have said," answered Miss Seldon, rising from her chair and pacing slowly before the undecided Lempriere. "Now,

listen to me, cousin Basil, and tell me if I put the case fairly or unfairly for St. John. The revengeful monster," said Martella, beginning with all the fairness one could expect, "stole along the verandah and gazed through the window at Corelli; but he was cunning enough to say nothing of his having recognised the recreant Gaspiani. He was clever enough to anticipate the Italian's true name would leak out, as it did, at the trial. He was quick enough to beat a timely retreat from Murkwoop—from the place, he told you, he had adopted for life. He was wise enough to vanish before he could be compelled to appear as a witness, and perjure himself before his God. No, Basil, his disappearance means but one thing—guilt! He has gone, never to return; and he will possibly recover his love for Italy, and, to be strictly in proportion, end his days execrating England for having provided his opportunity for revenge. I understand these callous students. They regret nothing; and, as for contrition, such a cold-blooded logician could reason himself into anything. He probably by this time has discovered a logical excuse for forgetfulness; and, when Bloader has been hanged, he will frame a syllogism to determine that his death was the due and debited punishment for his many undetected and unchastised offences."

At this moment the door opened and Gerald Seldon entered. He was the very person for whom the cousins were waiting. A petition to the

Home Secretary for the reprieve and liberation of Bill Bloader was to be drawn ; and the skilful pen of the barrister was to put persuasiveness into the paragraphs.

"I did not know until a short while ago that we were to meet at Martella's house," said the barrister, aside.

"I thought it better to hold the meeting here," answered Lempriere. "The fact is, I wish to do this business apart from those who would have me adopt a *laissez faire* policy."

"Among those," said Seldon, emphasising the latter word," you, of course, do not include——"

"My daughter?—certainly not," said Lempriere, hastily. "Nor the Lamberts. But there are those who—er—well——"

"Basil is extremely reluctant," said Martella, approaching her barrister relative, "to express anything in the petition that might saddle suspicion upon his friend, Gaspar St. John."

"You see," explained the M.P., giving way to an unparliamentary blush, "it would be awful to accuse a man of St. John's character, and afterwards to find the whole thing groundless. There's many a slip," mildly argued the demurring ex-banker, "between the cup and the——"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" broke in the impatient Martella, who was always emphatic in her indicative mood. "That man, Gerald, is guilty. He has deserted Murkwoop, his chosen asylum, at a time when, if he is innocent, he ought to

be there. For the sake of fair fame—to clear himself—to seek to save the life of a fellow creature—he ought to be there!"

Seldon's eyes could not disguise his admiration of his clever and self-willed cousin. He thought what an effect she would produce if only allowed to don the forensic robe—he would not recommend the forensic wig.

"We need not make any direct imputation upon St. John," said the barrister, his fingers wandering spider-like over his ample forehead.

"But an indirect imputation," said Lempriere, shifting uneasily from foot to foot, "is—is—almost as bad."

"No—not necessarily," returned Seldon, in studied tones. "We will insert a clause stating that Bloader's description of the cloak and hood accords with your knowledge of the garment St. John was in the habit of wearing. What do you say to that?"

Lempriere had nothing to say. He wished to slip out of that uncomfortable clause; but there stood Martella, looking daggers and ready to use them, so—what was he to do?

"The next thing," resumed Seldon, the calculating coolness of the lawyer running through every utterance, "is to show that, in quitting Murkwoop, St. John has unaccountably deviated from a solemn decision to make that mansion his life-long retreat. I think that will do?"

Lempiere thought it would do too much. He silently bemoaned the circumstances which had

induced St. John to take him into his confidence. "Why the devil?" he muttered—but, catching the eye of the observant Martella, he relapsed into shifting from foot to foot in an aimless and pendulous fashion.

"Then," continued the barrister, throwing his head on one side, "we can aver that the counsel who defended Bloader made a great point of the cloak and hood; also that St. John ought to have appeared in the witness-box; also that his disappearance is so mysterious—vanishing immediately after Bloader had been committed for trial—that, in the interests of justice, a reprieve, or, at any rate, a respite, should be granted until such time as St. John—ah—er—can be got back to England to explain his—er—ah—remarkable conduct."

"Capital!" exclaimed the beaming Martella. "You shall deliver this petition to the Home Secretary by your own hand, cousin Basil. You know him very well, do you not?"

"Yes—er—yes, Martella." And for the first time Mr. Lempriere devoutly wished he had never courted such close acquaintance with the hardest worked and best abused member of Her Majesty's Administration.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Her Majesty's Home Secretary was ruffled. He rubbed up his back hair with a rueful face. He wished murderers were out of date; and wondered why Bloader had not disposed of his victim during some other Administration. That restless and railing creature, Public Opinion, was stirring up doubts and queries; and Her Majesty's Home Secretary, the Right Honourable So-and-so, was entangled in a difficulty. The jury, it was true, had convicted; and the Judge, it was true, had sentenced; but, for all that, he, the Right Honourable So-and-so, must be sure not to hang the wrong man. Of this definite and desirable duty he was reminded every hour. Petitions, letters, and applications for interviews were pouring in thick and fast. Grotesque theories anent the mysterious wearer of the cloak and hood were propounded with drollest gravity; and Bloader's violence in the dock, and his amiable efforts to strangle a warder or two, were served up as picturesque criteria of a conscience labouring under spirited resentment at a demonstrably iniquitous verdict. Some argued that the Judge's charge to the jury was jejune, because it happened to be impartial; and others

asserted it to be unsatisfactory, because it was a model of brevity. With such a display of fervour in the present, it would be galling to awake in the future to find a confessing telegram from the real culprit, when, indeed, the supposed malefactor had been plunged into eternity by that ugly piece of hemp and that infallible drop.

"The public are making a great fuss over this fellow," exclaimed the Right Honourable So-and-so, looking as if he considered himself pretty tolerably ill-used.

"They are," answered Lempriere, who, granted an audience, was throbbing to invent a polished excuse wherewith to present his own little petition of twenty-five paragraphs and its special prayer tacked on at the end.

"What is the meaning of it all?" went on the Right Honourable So-and-so, making a wry mouth.

Lempriere, being a member of the public, was, of course, crassly ignorant of the cause. He knew a certain eccentric sentimentality was a common public malady; but whence the disorder, or what its origin, he professed utter inadequacy of knowledge.

"It is really too bad," complained the Home Secretary, a bored air pervading his utterance. "After thirteen men, namely, Judge and Jury, have cautiously examined the evidence from end to end, it is outrageously unfair that I should be pestered——" Before the Home Secretary could get farther into the diagnosis of his dissatisfaction,

he received a private communication which diverted his attention from his rising warmth.

The Right Honourable So-and-so being absorbed in public thought, Lempriere started fumbling in his coat-tail pocket for the charitable petition inspired by the irresistible Martella. It had to be presented, however it might worry the bored breast of the Chief of the Home Office. But either Lempriere was in no hurry to exhibit his prize, or his pocket was reluctant to relinquish its treasure. He was still fumbling, his body inclined and his head half-turned, when, to his unspeakable astonishment, who should enter the room but the handsome and distinguished Gaspar St. John!

Lempriere was so abashed and thunderstruck that he remained firmly rooted to the floor in the position just delineated. His hand, which had been tugging viciously, lost hold of the little petition, and the polished excuse, he had been been in the act of articulating, died a sudden death on the tip of his tongue. Then, too, the conviction that St. John was a despicable monster—a conviction of forced and unreal growth—slunk into the convenient shade of rational scepticism. Indeed, the plastic brain of the ex-banker was suggesting the expediency of an unobserved retreat, when he was recalled to himself by the student extending his hand after the fashion of frank good-fellowship.

It was Lempriere's left hand which had sought to extricate the petition. How lucky the left is

never so nimble as the right! Had he actually produced the document, must he not have refused St. John's suspected palm? But now he was at perfect liberty to act as he pleased. The little petition was merely an embryo intimation of suspicion—a sort of nebulous impeachment. Why, then, permit it to interfere with a natural disposition to good-breeding? This downy reasoning so exactly suited the tenor of Lempriere's mind, that he withdrew his left and extended his right as became one unassailed by oppressive misgiving.

"I am glad to meet Lempriere here," said St. John to the Right Honourable So-and-so. "I have a presentiment we are both here on the same errand."

"I imagine you are right," sorrowfully replied the Home Secretary. "Your letter mentioned your acquaintance with Lempriere; and he was about to break the ice of his visit when I directed you to be shown in."

The ex-banker, escaped from the horrors of a distressing immersion, hugged himself in an ecstasy of self-congratulation.

"Now, gentlemen," said the Right Honourable So-and-so, seating himself more comfortably, and patting the padded arms of his writing-chair, "what can we do to elucidate this unfortunate business?"

"I am convinced," began St. John, walking to and fro as he spoke, "that a grave doubt overshadows the conviction of this man, Bloader."

"Controversially, grave doubts could be cast into every case depending on circumstantial evidence," said the Right Honourable So-and-so, speaking querulously.

"I agree," answered St. John, "but I am not here to play the sophist. I am impressed in this man's favour by the suasion of serious facts, which, as a high public official, and as a man, you are bound to consider with unsparing solicitude."

As a high public official, the Right Honourable So-and-so felt considerably ill-used. As, however, he was receiving a fine official salary for tolerating every sort of personal annoyance, he retorted nothing, but rubbed up his back hair with becoming industry.

"In the trial of Bloader," continued St. John, folding his arms and bending his eyes on the Home Secretary, "an important witness was not called for the defence, namely, myself. I deeply regret I was absent. I seldom see a newspaper. Had I stood in the witness-box, I should have sternly protested against the methods resorted to by the prosecution."

"Really, Mr. St. John," said the Right Honourable So-and-so, a gleam of whimsical surprise dispelling his official boredom, "you seem to take this man's fate very much to heart. The fellow has been convicted in the usual way. What on earth more can be done? Short of any visible ground—and at present I perceive none—for granting a reprieve, the law must be allowed to take its course."

"I am demanding a pause—a pause to review dispassionately every particle of evidence wielded against Bloader."

"Why?" cried the Home Secretary. "All the facts came out at the trial, and Bloader was most ably defended. I am here to exercise the prerogative of mercy, not to review or set aside the evidence and summing up—not to quash or vary the verdict."

"Then your powers are strangely and inexcusably limited. Assume that I had robbed the corpse," persisted St. John, composedly disregarding the vigorous way in which the Right Honourable So-and-so rubbed up his back hair, "assume that I, moved by unconstruable impulse——"

"Mr. St. John," interrupted the Home Secretary, patting the pads of his chair petulantly, "you are supposing a case we should trace to lunacy."

"Then a doubt concerning sanity," answered St. John, "invokes the prerogative of mercy; but a doubt of the actuality of the crime has no such invocative virtue. I sympathise with the attempt to steep a criminal's mind in the saving gloom of insanity; but if such a plea is sufficient for the exercise of mercy, I say that a doubt touching the actuality of the deed——"

"Really, really," said the Right Honourable So-and-so, rising and leaning languidly against the mantelpiece, "where is this doubt about the deed?"

"Was not I—Gaspiani's deadliest enemy—on Murkwoop Moor that night? Who shall say which of us, Bloader or I, committed the ghastly crime?"

The Home Secretary shrugged his shoulders, and dressed his features in a mocking smile. Ministerially dignified though he was, he couldn't repress his humour.

"Yes," pursued St. John, somewhat sternly, "where is the man who would solemnly stake his reputation that I am not the murderer of Corelli?"

Still the Home Secretary leaned languidly against the mantelpiece.

"I, the avowed foe of Gaspiani, was on the moor. Opportunity, hence, favoured my lust of hate. Bloader, a recognised robber, was on the moor. Chance, hence, smiled on his appetite for plunder. But, consider our distinctive positions. Corelli—we will continue to call him so—was a bold rider and well mounted. I, a bold rider, was also well mounted. Who had the better prospect of assailing him? Had Bloader or I the better incentive for attacking a mounted man armed with a revolver he knew how to use? Address these questions to a jury, and would they presume, nay, dare, to assign the guilt to one more than to the other?"

"You are putting a logical problem, and——"

"Does logic play no part in these inquiries?"

"Facts are the surest guides. These come first, and then logic steps in to——"

"I am glad to hear this admission. I will now inform you of a startling fact. This murder was committed by one who acted a part of diabolical duplicity. Feigning friendship, he turned out to be a fiend!"

The Right Honourable So-and-so shuffled his feet, and rubbed up his back hair anxiously.

"Listen. I had resolved that night on a duel *à outrance*. I saddled my horse—a task I commonly undertook—and, quitting the mansion, galloped in a straight line to B——. I believed Corelli, unacquainted with the country, would follow the winding road, and that I should encounter him at the loneliest point of his journey. But, my impatience exhausting my power to wait, I returned, keeping near the road, until I saw a horseman in the distance. My surprise was great when I perceived he had abandoned the road, and was moving at a walking pace in the direction of B——. I made a rapid circuit to the rear, and approached afresh. Dismounting, and instructing my tutored steed to stand still, I bowed my body and sped forward. It seemed Corelli had stopped, and, nearing him, I saw he was bending towards and conversing with a man standing beside. Deeming the stranger a temporary guide, I returned to my horse, remounted, and galloped again towards B——. I lingered long, but no sign of Corelli appeared. Renouncing reluctantly my quest of vengeance, I, foiled and enraged, bitterly retraced my steps, passing, as I did so, the dead body of Corelli. I did not dream it was a

corpse. Sleeping foot-pads, I knew, were common, and my curiosity was not kindled. Afterwards, examining the impression in the grass made by the weight of the body, I knew I had noticed the mortal remains of Victor Gaspiani. The villain who acted as his guide became his murderer!"

"And the villain who acted as his guide was Bill Bloader," said the Home Secretary, heaving a sigh of relief.

"Nay," quickly rejoined St. John, "I deny it. As I rode on, I encountered the herculean form of Bloader standing in my path. I altered my course, and made for the mansion. If Bloader had murdered Corelli, would he have waited for me?"

"He would, indeed, in the circumstances you have named—circumstances which strongly confirm the guilt of the criminal. I see it all now," placidly remarked the Home Secretary. "Logic may be made to serve the cause of any murderer, but in this instance it serves rather against than for him. We now have your evidence that three men were on the moorland beyond the road, which is the boundary of Murkwoop Moor. These men were Victor Corelli, Bill Bloader, and Gaspar St. John. Two were mounted, one was on foot. Gaspar St. John disappeared, leaving Bill Bloader conversing with Victor Corelli. Then the ruffian, having killed the Italian, is disturbed by the footfalls of the re-appearing Gaspar St. John. He darts away from his deed;

but, finding the horseman has disregarded the corpse, boldly stands his ground, and invents, at his trial, the theory of the rider in the cloak and hood."

"Who could positively affirm a fourth man was not on the moor? Recollect we are dealing with a case of life and death!"

"Mr. St. John," explained the Home Secretary, calmly crumpling his back hair, "men do not start out of the ground."

"They may start out of long grass. Do you, or do the police, know the peculiarities of the moorland of Murkwoop?"

The Right Honourable So-and-so silently studied the ceiling.

"I feel absolutely convinced Bloader is guiltless!" sternly asserted St. John. "You admit circumstantial evidence has erred, often erred—that it has fearfully erred is common knowledge Wherever it has deceived, it has been urged up to the point of terribly imperilling human life. If the line dividing guilt and innocence is so finely drawn——"

"Really, really, I am most sorry, but I cannot see anything in these arguments to induce me to alter my decision that Bloader must meet his doom."

"Very well," answered St. John, resolutely. "I shall appeal, then, to a higher tribunal than the Home Office."

"Pray do, Mr. St. John. Appeal to heaven for mercy on behalf of——"

"Such a prayer would be mockery on my lips. This man is innocent."

"I regret I cannot concur," ruefully responded the Home Secretary.

"Well, my course is clear. I shall go to this tribunal, surrender myself, and——"

"Do what? Go where?"

"I go to Scotland Yard, and——"

"And?"

"Give myself up as the murderer of Victor Corelli!"

The Home Secretary ceased to rub up his back hair. He had been wretchedly bored; but now, and instantly, he was blankly amazed.

"These trials," cried St. John, a haughty glow intensifying his features, "these trials on circumstantial evidence are mere conjuring feats! In the absence of a reviewing tribunal, they are, I say, mere conjuring feats! It is easy to remind me of confessions. They only tell one way—we are in total darkness about the other! Your system—if indeed a system—pronounces—heaven knows how irrationally!—that a jury may err in a civil case, but never in a criminal case! A system so distorted awakens no faith within me. Don't be annoyed or surprised. I crave to give room for conscience—I insist upon further inquiry!"

"Do pray reflect," earnestly besought the Right Honourable So-and-so, beginning to appreciate St. John's mood.

"Reflect!" scornfully returned the student.

"Reflect! No—I need no time to reflect; and the time for action is critically short."

Bowing gracefully, not offering his hand, St. John swept past Lempriere and out of the Home Office, a lofty resolve in his soul, despatch and determination in his movements.

"Well—er—you know," began Lempriere, addressing the Right Honourable So-and-so," "my friend, St. John, is—er—logically—yes—er—logically ——"

The Home Secretary had vanished. His form—a hand still briskly at work on his back hair—had disappeared like a dissolving dream through one of the exits of his official sanctum.

CHAPTER XXXVII

MARY Maguire was no longer the girl she had been. The past few months had wrought many changes. Her manner had discarded its quondam sprightliness—was dwindling into quite a touching staidness; and as for her appearance, it had lost its flippant roguishness and was re-casting itself in a mould of unpretentious modesty. What was the matter with Mary Maguire? She had forgiven the gibes of her ancient rivals, and was renting a pew in the parish church. What in the name of goodness could it mean? Had the death of Corelli disturbed her mental balance? Why, she was even good to the poor and kind to her enemies, and was qualifying for the painful and pious post of a Sunday School teacher.

"Mother," said Mary, raising her head from studying *Lloyd's Weekly*, "this is the last time I shall read a newspaper on the Sabbath."

"Why, deary," asked the old woman.

"Because," answered the girl, her wan face flushing, "I shall have so many things to do now I am going to join Mr. Spellman's Bible Class."

"Yes, yes, deary, I see," muttered her mother, who was very feeble, and whose senses were too dimmed to see anything for or against her daughter's determination.

"But that murder trial, mother," said the girl, her eyes falling on the open newspaper, "I could not help reading it. Oh, mother, how he struggled when —— What was that?"

"What, deary?" questioned the old woman, looking vacantly at Mary.

The girl's head was turned listeningly towards the door of the cottage. At that instant the clock in the room began to strike the night hour of ten, and mother and daughter heard the strokes out before uttering a word or changing their positions.

"I thought I heard something rustling against the door," said Mary. "There it is again, mother. Hush!"

A sound as of a hand passing over the door could be plainly heard. It moved up and down, backward and forward, making a stealthy noise which ever and again ceased and was creepingly renewed. It was as if an aimless or a helpless hand was searching for the latch, and fell away from time to time fatigued with its fruitless efforts. The movement grew slower, the sound got less, and at last it ceased. Silence reigned for a time, and then came the just audible noise of heavy breathing, followed at intervals by faint moans. The women listened intently, a painful fear stealing into their hearts.

"Mother—I must," half whispered Mary, rising and going to the door. Pressing against it she lifted the latch and looked out. Uttering a piercing shriek she staggered back, dragging open

the door. Across the threshold lay the prostrate form of Tom Butcher, the booser.

He was not dead, nor drunk. Insensibility had seized him, and his heart was beating feebly. Presently he partly recovered, and was, with difficulty, raised by Mary, assisted by her aged mother. Reeling into the cottage, he sank helplessly on the old-fashioned sofa. He had not spoken—he seemed, indeed, in a half stupor. He lay some time breathing shortly, overtaken repeatedly by fits of coughing which brought discharges of blood from his mouth. His emaciated appearance told of sickness; and his hacking cough and constant blood-spitting boded a lacerated lung. Where he had been, what doing, how living, had at times exercised the reasoning powers of old Butcher; especially as the last remittance sent by the innkeeper had returned through the Dead Letter Office. Mary and her mother watched and waited by Tom's side in painful suspense. The frightened girl would have gone for old Butcher and his wife, but the booser held her hand and intimated by appealing signs that he wished her to remain.

"Mary?" said the poor wretch in a choking whisper.

"Yes, Tom," answered the girl, dropping her head to catch his words, and kneeling beside the sofa.

"Raise my head—a little," whispered the booser. "I want to talk to you—Mary." He again closed his eyes, and the girl, placing her

arms gently round his shoulders, raised him until his head rested on her bosom. In this way a silence of some minutes lasted, broken only by his gurgling breathing, and the loud ticking of the old Dutch clock.

"I want to—talk to you—Mary. No—no—not to you"; and Tom waved Mary's mother away. "To—to you—Mary."

"Go away, mother," pleaded the girl to the old woman, who, nothing loth—she was fatiguing fast—went to the far end of the room, and seating herself was soon sound asleep.

Tom, his eyes half closed, watched the retirement of the old woman; and then, as if satisfied she was out of hearing, he told Mary, in accents broken by gasping, owing to the blood collecting in his throat, that he had been lying long in a hospital, pronounced incurable, and had resolved to return to his native village to die. "Mary," moaned the drunkard, "I've brought it all on myself."

"How do you mean, Tom?" asked the girl, weeping bitterly.

"I—I slept out in a field—all night—and ——"

Here the cough and blood-spitting prevented his speaking for several moments.

"And—I got wet—to the skin; and I did it—again—and again—and—once too often."

"Oh, why did you go away?" exclaimed the girl, passionately. "You might have remained, and we might ——"

Once more the coughing nearly stifled him.

The girl lowered his head, which made his breathing easier.

"I—I was afraid—afraid to write—or come back. I got ill—and—wet through—and cold—and—oh, Mary," said Tom, his voice sinking to a whisper, "I loved you—or—or—I shouldn't have done it." And the booser leaned his head wearily on the frightened girl's shoulder.

"Tom—Tom!—what do you mean?" cried Mary, her face paling and her heart beating wildly.

"I—I did it. I—I killed him. Don't go away." And Tom raised a supplicating face to the shuddering girl. "Yes—I—I did it. I—listen, Mary—don't look so! I did love you. I got jealous; and he—Corelli—was always after you. I hated him; and you said—you would go to London with him." Tom had obtained energy under his feelings, but he now sank into his former gasping utterance.

"I went—that night—and met him. I said—father had sent me to meet him—and—and—guide him home. Ah, me. He laughed and chatted—and—and I sprang—struck his head—fired as he lay senseless—jumped on his horse—and—rode away—I escaped—and—it is all written—feel—Mary—in—in—my pocket—when I—I'm dead. Pray for me—Mary—pray and—and ask God—for—for mercy—for—me——"

A violent fit of coughing choked his voice—blood gushed from his mouth—the drunkard died.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Mr. Bill Bloader had a very near shave. Nobody was more surprised at the turn events had taken than Mr. Jonathan Hatwood and the Right Honourable So-and-so. Each was a staunch believer in himself; and each considered his personal opinion a thing worthy of personal worship. Mr. Hatwood occupied a long time in balancing Tom Butcher's confession with his own version of the business. He was overheard to say that Bloader's exemption from the attentions of the hangman would give an incurable shock to future faith in circumstantial evidence; but, as he was never required to return the rewards he had received, he has somewhat modified this exaggerated opinion. The Right Honourable So-and-so first respited Bloader, then released him, and then shook hands with him. The poor wretch—who must have suffered severely—was had up at the Home Office and given a sort of solatium from the public purse.

But other things happened to Mr. Bill Bloader. Both he and his Sal were taken in hand by Mr. Lempriere, who had them drilled in the respectable ways exacted by civilisation. They did

not drop gin altogether, but took it in decent and even quantities; and Bill, now seldom heard to swear, has actually left off beating his wife. Somebody said he was learning to read and write, and was intending, on a vacancy occurring, to apply for the post of parish beadle. As a matter of fact there is a superior post in store for him. When the Right Honourable So-and-so opens, as he contemplates, the Court of Criminal Appeal (hereinafter particularly mentioned), he intends to institute Bloader as Usher-in-Chief of that sacred edifice.

After all it was hardly surprising Tom Butcher was impelled to settle the Italian. To be harassed by jealousy is a serious affliction; but to be concurrently assailed by disorders begotten of hard drinking is disastrous to that essential regulator of conduct — self-control. A pretty woman grimacing at and despising the attentions she once prized, and pointing exultingly to a handsome fellow who has supplanted you in her esteem, must ever be highly exasperating to pride and wounded feeling. But when it happens you love the pretty woman, what must be the tumult of your temper? Thus it was with boosy Tom. It was a toss-up whether he would shoot Mary and do for himself, or waylay and despatch the interloping foreigner. He chose the latter course, and it was simple enough. The unsuspecting Corelli, naturally believing the young fellow had been sent by his father to meet and guide him, fell yieldingly into the power of his perfidious

enemy. The tragedy quickly performed, it was the matter of a moment for Tom to leap into the vacant saddle and gallop some distance into the open country. There he dismounted, and, sending the horse adrift, returned to the village on foot. But how was Tom enabled to use the revolver Corelli had brought to Murkwoop to give to Lempriere? The expedient had actually been placed by the foreigner himself at the disposal of his slayer. Corelli, having noted the suspicious bearing of Bloader when detected watching the mansion through a telescope, secretly determined to retain the revolver until he had safely reached "The Bell." Meeting Tom, armed, as for ordinary protection, with a terrific bludgeon freshly cut from a hedge, the Italian gaily described the conduct of Bloader, and, producing his weapon, handed it to Butcher with a request, accompanied by a handsome gratuity, that he would carry it to Murkwoop and present it to Lempriere, and explain why it had not been bestowed, with customary compliments, at their farewell meeting. The rest need not be told—it is so easily understood.

Martella Seldon has signalised herself by stirring up sensational agitation. Not content with her exertions to rescue Bloader from the toils of judicial error, she persists in thinking the Judge was solely responsible for the improper conviction of that illustrious man. Further, she has made the startling discovery that criminals have suffered for murder who ought to have atoned

for manslaughter! This atrocious "find" is exercising all the strength of her cultivated faculties; and Members of Parliament, representing electoral divisions in the county containing her estates, are perturbed daily by postcards and epistles conveying threats of penalties from heaven and—humph!—and—infinitely worse!—the loss of public confidence and sacrifice of their seats.

Mr. Basil Lempriere, who is a little older, a little balder, a little lonely, and who has not yet refused a peerage, has performed his penance and won the Frogmore legacy. Whether he met with other adventures on Murkwoop Moor is not at present related. The money, with that derived from the great Concession, is to be dedicated to the building of a Hospital, the foundation of which is already laid. The evils the intended Hospital is designed to heal are dangerous though curable; and, as the reader observes, it is a Hospital, not a wing, Lempriere's liberality has resolved to construct. In due time the public will be asked to plump down subscriptions for its maintenance, and, as invariably happens, a splendid supply will meet the demand. We must not, however, omit to mention that this Hospital, this novel creation of the ex-banker's brain, is adjudged to be styled—

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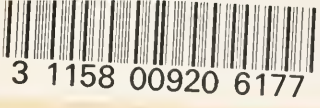

PR
4499
C64m